USING THE STANISLAVSKI SYSTEM TO TEACH NON-REALISTIC ACTING

DISSERTATION

Presented to the Graduate Council of the University Of North Texas in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements

For the Degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

By

Edward D. Lee, B.F.A., M.A.
Denton, Texas
August 1997
Lee, Edward D., Using the Stanislavski System to Teach Non-Realistic Acting. Doctor of Philosophy (College Teaching), August, 1997, 93 pp., 2 tables, bibliography, 44 titles.

Due to problems created by publishing limitations and World War II, Stanislavski’s book, The Actor’s Work on Himself, was published as two separate books. The result was that the first book, published in 1936, was interpreted as the explanation of the whole system. The second book, published in 1949, has been viewed as an afterthought by most of the theater community.

The concentration on the first half of Stanislavski’s methods has led to two major misconceptions: that the system was focused on an internal and emotional approach to acting, and that the system was only applicable to realistic acting.

This study examined Stanislavski’s system as it was explained in his three books, An Actor Prepares, Building A Character, and Creating A Character. The study then examined the applicability of the Stanislavski System to the theaters of Bertolt Brecht and Absurdist theatre as represented by Harold Pinter and Samuel Beckett.

The research demonstrated that when teaching Stanislavski’s techniques it was important to teach the
whole system as described in all three volumes, that
nothing in the plays or theory of Brecht, Pinter, or Beckett
precludes the use of Stanislavski System, and that
Stanislavski served as the source for the work of Jerzy
Grotowski, who continues Stanislavski’s work today.
USING THE STANISLAVSKI SYSTEM TO TEACH
NON-REALISTIC ACTING

DISSERTATION

Presented to the Graduate Council of the
University of North Texas in Partial
Fulfillment of the Requirements

For the Degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

By

Edward D. Lee, B.F.A., M.A.
Denton, Texas
August 1997
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I wish to thank Dr. Ralph B. Culp and Dr. D. Barry Lumsden for their help and encouragement. Each of these men in his own way represents the finest in scholarship and teaching. I was truly blessed to have them as teachers and friends. I am also grateful to Dr. Ron Newsom for his willingness to serve as my committee member.

I thank my wife Jennifer, whose encouragement and sacrifice allowed me to finish this work.
TABLE OF CONTENTS

COPYRIGHT ........................................ iii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS ............................... iv
LIST OF TABLES ..................................... viii

Chapter

1. INTRODUCTION ................................... 1
   Statement of the Problem
   Purposes of the Study
   Research Questions
   Review of the Literature
   Methodology

2. THE STANISLAVSKI SYSTEM .................... 17
   Psycho-Techniques
   Imagination
   Units and Objectives
   Concentration of Attention
   Faith and a Sense of Truth
   Action
   Communion
   Adaptation
Inner Creative Forces
Emotion Memory
Logic and Continuity
Conclusions About the Psycho-Technique
The External Technique
Relaxation of Muscles
Expressive Body Training
Plasticity
Voice and Speech
External Tempo Rhythm
Restraint and Control
Stage Charm
Discipline, Ethics, and a Sense of Ensemble
Putting the System into Action

3. APPLYING STANISLAVSKI TO NON-REALISTIC THEATRE. . 55

Achieving Brecht’s Alienation effect Utilizing
the Stanislavski System
Stanislavski and the Theater of the Absurd
Acting Pinter Using the Stanislavski System
Acting Beckett Using the Stanislavski System
Stanislavski as the Foundation for Grotowski

4. CONCLUSIONS, IMPLICATIONS,
### TABLES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. The Stanislavski System.</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Dramatic Theatre vs. Epic Theatre.</td>
<td>63</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Concerns regarding the effectiveness of Stanislavski's system are not new within the theater world. Indeed, in 1923, Ludwig Lewisohn reminded the readers of The Nation that "Stanislavski and the majority of his colleagues represent at its best... the naturalistic school of acting." But he goes on to voice his reservations of the style of acting that the Moscow Art Theatre employed (312).

Yet these same players were met with praise by critics such as Jerome Laachenbruch and Stark Young. Laachenbruch noted that the players from the Moscow art theatre were finely analytical with distinct characterizations. They dangle the imperfections of the human characters they portray before the audience as actor and spectator share the moment (156). Young (19-20) admired the company's professed intention of ignoring the presence of the audience and of attempting to produce an effect of experiencing life as it would be seen going on if the fourth wall was removed (19). Young, although not wholly satisfied with the Art Theatre's performances of plays by Gorky and Tolstoy, concluded his
article with praise for the dedication and sincerity of its actors (20).

The debate over Stanislavski's approach continued throughout the twenties. In 1924, The Quarterly Journal of Speech Education asked the question, "Should the actor feel his part?" Jane Pratt answered the question in the February 25 edition of the journal. She asserted that an actor should be above his part. He should not feel the part, but rather make the audience feel it (1925, 66-67).

In the June, 1925 edition of The Quarterly Journal of Speech Education appeared a strong rebuttal to Pratt supporting the idea that the actor must feel his part. Citing both Stanislavski and the French psychologist Ribot in her article, Perego offered five statements which in essence told the reader that an actor must be able to feel the emotions of his character in order to perform the role truthfully (289).

The idea of emotion memory has been a centerpiece of the attacks on the Stanislavski system. Jean Benedetti explained that Stanislavski feared this misunderstanding would occur when the decision was made to publish his book An Actor's Work on Himself in two separate parts (1990, 272).
The truth Stanislavski’s fears was supported by an examination of acting theorists writing from 1930 through 1990. In 1938, Louis Jouvet published his "Comedien et acteur" in Editions de la Nouvelle Revue Critique. In his discussion on the script, Jouvet asserted that "emotion must create and guide gesture." He went on to cite Stanislavski "A role is a blank page on which one writes first of all one’s emotions," (243).

In New Theatre, British actor Michael Redgrave praised An Actor Prepares. He summarized the system as a way to develop a creative mood. His discussion was concerned solely with the internal half of the system (1946, 16-18).

The idea that inspiration or inner motivation is the essence of the Stanislavski system pervades the discussion of that system. Seldom is Stanislavski’s Building A Character discussed in connection with An Actor Prepares. And when Building A Character is discussed, it is likely to be an attack on the book such as that of Peter Brook in The Empty Space when he said that the title of the book was misleading because characters could not be built like a wall (114). However, Brook did point out that Stanislavski attempted to explain the whole art of acting in his books but that they were often misread (117).
Charles Marowitz demonstrated the misunderstanding of Stanislavski that Brook was talking about when he told his readers that after being trained in Stanislavski and the ideal of inner truth, he was surprised by the discovery that there was such a thing as "surface truth" (434).

Not everyone writing about Stanislavski was attacking him. Eric Bentley understood that Stanislavski stood for more than naturalism when he wrote in 1962 that Stanislavski stood not for any one particular style but rather his approach taught the actor to act in any style (1987, 125). Bentley argued that Stanislavski's system might actually be the answer to accomplishing Brecht's alienation effect (1987, 130-134). Bentley's assertion that Stanislavski can teach anyone who wished to act pointed to the problem which this study examined.

Yet, Stanislavski and his system continue to be associated only with realistic theater and the internal technique. In her dissertation, Aldridge noted that current actor training in American university theaters focused on Stanislavski's acting system. She then questioned whether current actor training in the United States was preparing actors for a comprehensive repertory (Aldridge 204).
Moreover, Aldridge observed: "further research is needed to define whether the common approaches to acting instruction identified by this study are effective" (205).

Statement of the Problem

The problem of this study was the relationship between the Stanislavski System of actor preparation and selected styles of acting.

Purposes of the Study

The purposes of this study were (1) to identify the actual elements of actor preparation that were presented in An Actor Prepares, Building A Character, and Creating A Role; (2) to demonstrate how the Stanislavski System could actually be used to teach an effective acting approach to plays by Bertolt Brecht, Samuel Beckett, and Harold Pinter. (3) to demonstrate that Jerzy Grotowski's approach to acting was a logical continuation of Stanislavski’s work.

Research Questions

1. What acting strategies or techniques were combined to comprise the Stanislavski system?

2. Could the Stanislavski system be used by actors called upon to act within the non-realistic production
styles required by Bertolt Brecht, Samuel Beckett, and Harold Pinter?

Review Of The Literature

Each year hundreds of articles and books are published concerning the theater. Few of these articles deal with what Hobgood called "one of the largest enterprises generated by the American stage: the teaching of theatre" (1987). Hobgood explained that as American theater education began, the most desirable teacher was a generalist well versed in the literature, history, and the practice of the stage. As the teaching of theater progressed, the most desirable teacher became the specialist trained in and possessing experience in one segment of the theater (Hobgood, 1987). This lack of general knowledge of theater practice and theory had the effect of distorting theory since these specialists often did not take time to explore the theories themselves. Such lack of attention to detail left the student at the mercy of the teacher and the teacher's own misunderstandings or failings. However, the lack of articles on the teaching of theater did not reduce the number of text possibilities that exist for the acting course.
Stanislavski’s first book, *My Life in Art* (1924), did not actually discuss his acting system. This was a time in Stanislavski’s life when he desperately needed cash. His son, Igor, was suffering from tuberculosis and required treatment in Switzerland. The Russian revolution had taken Stanislavski’s personal fortune and his only income was that which he and his wife received from their salaries at the Moscow Art Theatre and on tours of the company’s productions (Benedetti, 1990). *My Life in Art* was drafted from Stanislavski’s diaries and notebooks. It recounted Stanislavski’s early struggles and the formation of the Moscow Art Theatre. The book was a story of the transformation of an amateur into a professional actor. The American translation was rushed into print and was disappointing to Stanislavski and many of his followers. A Russian edition, considered superior to the American version, was published in 1929 but the 1924 American edition continued to be the version used in English speaking countries (Benedetti, 1990).

Sayler (1919) recognized the importance of the Moscow Art Theatre and the work Stanislavski was doing there. Proclaiming the Art Theatre to be the “world’s first theatre,” Sayler praised the wonderful new approach
Stanislavski was taking. In 1922, the Moscow Art Theatre toured the United States.

Within three years of the tour, the debate over the Stanislavski approach was in full swing. The Quarterly Journal of Speech printed two letters insisting that an actor should feel his part (Pratt 1025, Adams, 1925). Four months later, the journal printed a thoughtful reply to the first letters (Perego, 1925).

Benedetti (1990) explained that in 1923 Stanislavski had a great need of money. The Soviet government had taken his family fortune and the only money he possessed was what he earned from his work with the Moscow Art Theatre. Unfortunately, his earnings were inadequate to care for his son suffering from tuberculosis. Thus, when the opportunity came to publish a book about his life in the theater, Stanislavski was quick to accept the offer. In 1924, My Life in Art was published.

The writing of An Actor Prepares was rather more complicated than that for My Life in Art. In 1930, Stanislavski signed over power of attorney to the translator of his work into English, Elizabeth Hapgood. Hapgood negotiated publication and movie rights to Stanislavski’s works in the United States. Benedetti (1990) explained that
this was significant for two reasons. First, in order to get around the fact that the Soviet Union was not a member of the international copyright agreement, Hapgood listed herself as co-author. Second, by copyrighting the work in the United States, all countries party to the agreement were bound to publish only the Hapgood translations.

At the same time, the Russian publishing house, which used a larger type, was worried that the work Stanislavski called An Actor's Work on Himself would exceed 1500 pages. Against the advice of drama critic Norman Hapgood, Elizabeth’s husband, and his own better judgment, Stanislavski agreed to publish the book in two parts. The fear was that, unless the physical aspects were incorporated, the first book's focus on the psychological aspects of actor training would result in the perception that the system was an ultra-naturalistic acting technique. Stanislavski intended to publish a preface to An Actor Prepares outlining the entire system but the preface was never written. The history of the teaching of Stanislavski's method confirmed Stanislavski's fears. After the first book, An Actor Prepares, was published in 1936, Stanislavski was slow to finish the second volume. In 1938, after Stanislavski's death, his son Igor agreed to honor his father's agreement and sent the manuscript to Hapgood.
However, the German invasion of the Soviet Union prevented the manuscript from reaching Hapgood until 1947.

Building a Character was published in 1949; Creating A Role in 1961. The thirteen years between publication of An Actor Prepares and Building a Character did result in a misunderstanding of the system. The failure to adequately present an integrated psycho-physical technique resulted all too frequently in an imbalance in training. An Actor Prepares became the system, while Building a Character seemed like a less important afterthought. The supposed supremacy of inner motivation, of "feeling it," led several generations of young actors to reject or neglect the rigorous development of vocal and physical skills. Students and tutors alike appeared unaware that, before beginning to develop his psychotechnique at the age of 43, Stanislavski was already recognized at home and abroad as an actor of consummate technical skill (Benedetti, 1990).

The texts discussed below were taken from the list of most often used acting texts as compiled by Aldridge (1993). These books illustrate the misunderstanding of Stanislavski's system that became the subject of this dissertation.
Cohen's text, *Acting One* (1992), emphasized the principles of "Goals, Other, Tactics, and Expectation." Cohen saw his text as a beginning tool to train "your acting instrument - primarily your voice and body - into a more workable, more exciting, apparatus." Cohen emphasized the need of the actor to communicate with others. Once this communication was established among actors or between the actors and the audience, the actors had to achieve a practical basis for communication. Cohen also discussed techniques to improve vocal quality, physical stage presence, and understanding the character's phrasing of the lines.

Uta Hagen's *Respect for Acting* (1973), was one of the most popular texts on the list. Filled with anecdotes illustrating points Hagen made on the way, the book discussed how an actor could discover a character's motivations and communicate who the character was to an audience. Elements of Stanislavski's emotion memory technique underlay the idea of using one's own experiences to spark a true performance. Hagen discussed the need for an actor to discover who he is and to define objectives as did Stanislavski. The difference in Hagen's technique was that she instructed the student to ask questions such as
“What do I want?” or “What is in my way?” Stanislavski’s concept of “given circumstances” was also lightly explored.

The style of The Actor at Work (Benedetti, 1990) with its emphasis on action was praised in the forward by Ted Danson as “A clear, less abstract writing style -- less jargon.” Benedetti provided instruction in the mechanics of the production of sound as well as exercises for the development of the voice. The book also discussed the concept of action and was recommended for “the more experienced actor.” Benedetti acknowledges his use of Stanislavski’s concepts as well as others as he adapted his exercises to make a point. A useful text which the student could come back to time and again, the book’s use of varied techniques from many sources is an impediment to the formulation of a unified theory of actor training.

In Acting: The First Six Lessons (1933), Richard Boleslavski discussed with a student named “the creature,” a method of actor training similar to Stanislavski. As one of Stanislavski’s prize students, Boleslavski had been in charge of the First Studio of the Moscow Art Theatre. When Boleslavski came to America, he began teaching acting and published his book based on Stanislavski’s system. Items of emphasis in Acting: The First Six Lessons include concentration, emotion memory, dramatic action, and
characterization. Boleslavski called on the actor to train on three levels. First the actor must train the body as his instrument. Second, the actor must train the mind to concentrate on the task at hand. Third the actor learns to adapt to the circumstances of the production he is faced with through his cultural education.

acting: a handbook of the stanislavski method (1995) by toby cole is another compilation of various actor-training theories. the various pieces selected, including two by stanislavski himself, primarily treated the application of the system in terms of the inner technique and failed to paint an accurate picture of the entire system. the article by vakhtangov was enlightening because it demonstrated how one of stanislavski’s favorite pupils developed his own performance theory based upon what he had learned at the moscow art theatre.

thomas richards provided what must be a revelation to many in the theater world. his at work with grotowski on physical actions (1995) began with a chapter titled “stanislavski and grotowski: the connection.” this chapter explained that rather than rejecting stanislavski, grotowski embraced the system of physical actions which the stanislavski system explored and on which stanislavski himself spent his last years. the book demonstrated that
where Grotowski diverged from Stanislavski, the diversion was actually a natural next step for the system. Grotowski had heeded the call of Stanislavski to take his system, learn from it, and then go out and create one’s own system. Grotowski recognized that Stanislavski never wanted the exploration of the art of acting to stagnate. The actor must continue to grow and adapt to the changes of the world.

The End of Acting (1992), by Richard Hornby was an attack on the “Method” that Lee Strasberg developed from Stanislavski’s early work in An Actor Prepares. Hornby examined the state of acting in the United States and determined that Strasberg and his focus on emotion memory as a primary acting technique had resulted in a stagnation of acting abilities. He then discussed how Strasberg misinterpreted Stanislavski and refused to consider a revision of his approach even after having been confronted with the realization that he was not teaching all of Stanislavski’s system. Although Strasberg had given a cursory explanation of the physical side of the system, the main focus was on the psychological side. Useful in dispelling misinformation from Strasberg, Hornby’s book does not do much to explain the full range of possibilities presented in Stanislavski’s Building a Character.
McGaw and Clark's *Acting is Believing* emphasized such concepts as internal and external training of the actor as well as interpretive skills. Attention was placed on rehearsal and performance techniques. The book also explored both the idea of physical actions and the idea of understanding the physical life of the character. The influence of Stanislavski is evident in the ideas of consciously preparing for one's role as well as the idea of physical actions. *Acting is Believing* also provided instruction on developing the vocal instrument. This treatment was no different from that which could be found in other texts. The inclusion of this section however demonstrated McGaw and Clark's determination to make the book a useful tool for a young actor.

Other texts such as *Acting with Style* (Harrop & Epstein, 1990), *Theatre Games* (Spolin, 1985), and *The ABC's of Acting* (Whelan, 1994), had in common with the above texts distinct traces of Stanislavski's system in their teachings. Yet none provided the comprehensive explanation of the life of an actor as does Stanislavski. All of these texts were good tools for the actor. However, the influence that Stanislavski's work had had on the art of acting permeated all of them in one fashion or another. This focus on the Stanislavski system in western theater prompted the
criticisms discussed earlier in this chapter. Additionally, the fact that these many fine textbooks provided lessons based on a system that they did not initially teach their students prompted the research that led to the present dissertation.

Methodology

The research for this study was accomplished through (1) a thorough examination and outlining of the Stanislavski system explained in *An Actor Prepares, Building A Character,* and *Creating A Role,* (2) an examination of the goals and requirements of the non-realistic plays of Brecht, Beckett, and Pinter and then applying those requirements to the Stanislavski system; and (3) a comparison between Grotowski's approach to acting and the Stanislavski system.
The Stanislavski System of acting was not a cookbook of techniques that instantly make a person a great actor, rather, it is a way of life. Stanislavski's books described abilities and approaches which an actor was to continue to develop throughout his lifetime. In her introduction to An Actor Prepares (1964), Elizabeth Reynolds Hapgood explained that Stanislavski did not believe he was inventing a new system of acting; rather, he set down on paper the steps the great actors took in preparing themselves for the creation of a role.

The creative process would begin when the actor establishes for himself what the "given circumstances" of the production were. Given circumstances was defined as anything and everything in the production which could have an effect on the performance. These influences included the director's interpretation, the designer's designs, costumes, the house, the size of the audience, the other actors, the stage properties that would be used, the intensity of the lights, and finally an understanding a character's
motivations, goals, loves and hates, idiosyncrasies, and his relationship to the other characters in the play. Out of the understanding of the given circumstances all other aspects of the character would flow. The given circumstances also served as a standard by which to evaluate the performance.

The Stanislavski system involved continuous learning and observing. One observed both the inner processes of emotions and the outer physicalization of character to ensure that the portrayal of the character was consistent with the given circumstances. One must rid oneself of superfluous actions; only those necessary to produce the desired effect are useful. This careful approach to the characterization would lead inevitably to a truthful performance. Everything in a performance came from the given circumstances.

In Building A Character, Stanislavski described a hierarchy of the techniques or areas included in the system. The system consisted of "psycho-techniques" which included those areas that comprised a person's internal processes of emotions and thought, and the "psycho-physical," which acted as a control on an actor's inner processes in order to produce a character truthful to the given circumstances. The following table lists the components of the system.
Table I

The Stanislavski System

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Psycho-technique</th>
<th>Psycho-physical</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Imagination</td>
<td>Relaxation of muscles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Units and Objectives</td>
<td>Expressive body training</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Concentration of attention</td>
<td>Plasticity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Faith and a sense of truth</td>
<td>Voice and Speech</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Action</td>
<td>External tempo-rhythm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communion</td>
<td>Restraint and Control</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adaptation</td>
<td>Stage charm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emotion memory</td>
<td>Discipline and Ethics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inner creative forces</td>
<td>A sense of ensemble</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Logic and continuity</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Psycho-techniques

Imagination

The creative process for a production began in the imagination of the playwright, the director, the actor, and the other artists involved in the production. Stanislavski wanted the actor to begin with given circumstances and use imagination and other devices to turn the play into a
theatrical reality. In this process imagination played the greatest part (Stanislavski 1964, 54). The imagination was that which created things that could be or could occur. When things did not exist, the imagination invented them. The way that the actor activated the imagination was through an understanding of the given circumstances and utilization of the "magic if." That is, an actor was not to forget he was an actor on a stage, but believe totally in the possibility that the events taking place on stage could happen in real life.

The magic if is a way of activating the imagination much as children do. The actor asked "if" he found himself in a certain situation or "if" a particular event occurred, how would he react? "If" performed the function of lifting an actor out of reality and into the plane of imagination. The motives of a character became those behind an actor's behavior on stage. Stanislavski called these imagined motives "inner justification" (1964, 46).

Once this possibility existed, the actor could react appropriately. Stanislavski termed this process the magic if and believed it was a powerful stimulus to the psycho-physical actions. A psycho-physical action was physical behavior that was the result of a psychological reaction to an event.
Units and Objectives

It would be difficult for an actor to comprehend the motivation for every action in an entire play at once. It would be possible, however, for him to digest and understand the play one short section at a time. Most plays could be divided into acts, scenes, and units in which the character's goal or "objective" was immediately clear. For each of these units, a character's objective guided his behavior on the stage. For example, a character would move differently to a window if the objective were a breath of fresh air than if the objective were to escape from a raging fire in the room.

Once the objectives of each unit had been established, they were combined into a "throughline" of actions. The throughline was the logical sequence of events that could guide the actor from the beginning to the end of a play. With the throughline established, a super-objective or core idea for the character would emerge. To find the correct objective, Stanislavski suggested:

1. They must be on our side of the footlights. They must be directed toward the other actors, and not toward the spectators.
2. They should be personal yet analogous to those of the character you are portraying.

3. They must be creative and artistic because their function should be to fulfill the main purpose of our art: to create the life of a human soul and render it in artistic form.

4. They should be real, live, and human, not dead, conventional, or theatrical.

5. They should be truthful so that you yourself, the actors playing with you, and your audience can believe in them.

6. They should have the quality of attracting and moving you.

7. They must be clear cut and typical of the role you are playing. They must tolerate no vagueness. They must be distinctly woven into the fabric of your part.

8. They should have value and content, to correspond to the inner body of your part. They must not be shallow, or skim along the surface.

9. They should be active, to push your role ahead and not let it stagnate (Stanislavski 1964, 118-119).

The most effective way of discovering the objective of the unit was to give the unit a name in the form of a verb. The verb would indicate the objective. In the balcony scene
in *Romeo and Juliet*, for example, the actor playing Romeo might title the scene "declaring love," or "to declare love." For Juliet the title might be "discovering the depth of Romeo's love," or "to discover the depth of Romeo's love." These objectives would then motivate their actions during that scene. By struggling to attain the objective the actor would exhibit the "truth" of his character's behavior.

Concentration of Attention

Stanislavski felt that the actor had to develop the ability to focus on the objective his character was struggling to attain. This focus was what Stanislavski meant by "attention." An actor must contend with many distractions. The movements of the audience, the lights, the sets, the other actors on the stage all combine to distract the actor. He must remember his lines and follow his objectives. He must develop his ability to concentrate on the task at hand and avoid the distractions that would steal his attention.

Two types of concentration were discussed in *An Actor Prepares*. External attention was directed toward objects outside the actor's body. The external attention maintains the correct image of the character and controls such areas
as tempo of speech and physical character traits. An example would be the attention given to the words of the other actors as they addressed the actor on stage. In order to react correctly to the other actors, one should listen to all the words and not just wait for cues. Other areas requiring external attention included the use of properties, making entrances on time, and ignoring any distractions that drew one’s attention away from the objective.

Inner attention focused on objects seen or heard in circumstances the actor had imagined. This type of attention was indispensable since so much of his life happened in his imagination.

The concept of concentration and its importance to an actor seemed logical enough in itself to most individuals. However, an important concept for the whole system was also brought out in this chapter. Stanislavski wrote that an actor must make concentration a way of life inside and outside of the theater. Only by applying this concentration of attention to all aspects of life such as house cleaning or yard work, could an actor make his concentration an habitual part of his performance (Stanislavski 1964, 88).
Faith and a Sense of Truth

By learning how to observe life around them and draw on it in their stage work, actors find the important living material upon which to base creativeness. Everyone has experiences stored in their memories. We compare what we see with our experiences and judge the truth of the actions accordingly. On stage, truth is not what actually happens but rather what could happen. Here again, the actor must understand the given circumstances and using the "if" answers, produce a character that seems truthful to the reality presented to the audience.

What the actor was attempting to achieve was the reality of the life of a human spirit in a part and a belief in that reality. A key point in this section is what we are not concerned with. "We are not concerned with the actual naturalistic existence of what surrounds us on the stage, the reality of the material world" (Stanislavski 1964, 129). What the actor should be concerned with in regard to his performance was truth in the world as presented in a play and its production. Truth on stage was whatever an actor believed in honestly. Everything that happened on the stage "must be convincing to the actor himself, to his associates, and to the spectators" (Stanislavski 1964, 129).
Stanislavski knew that an actor could not forget that he was an actor on a stage with an audience observing his actions on that stage. Through an ongoing observation of actions taken in "real life," one could learn what physical actions would be believable on the stage and then draw upon this knowledge to establish a convincing series of physical actions.

A bond existed between the body and the soul, Stanislavski believed, and could perform certain actions without exciting a connected emotion. He wrote that "the life of one gives life to the other." Thus, both the inner and the external planes of creation were interdependent.

While the physical actions led an actor through the play, the motivating force was the "inner circumstances and conditions of life to which the play has led him" (Stanislavski 1964, 147).

Whether they are inner circumstances or physical actions, it was a belief in these forces that was paramount. When one believed in the truth of something, one also had feeling. When one performed an action in which he behaved completely, one would have an accompanying emotion. Stanislavski used the example of Lady Macbeth and her preoccupation with wiping the spot from her hand. Every time she wiped the spot she recalled the murder of Duncan.
The memory of the murder then spurred inner meanings in her performance later. Here was an excellent example of Stanislavski's psycho-physical technique. The system did not rely solely upon a psychological motivation for each action. The action, in this case wiping the bloody spot, spurred inner feelings. Stanislavski realized that the physical and the psychological aspects of an actor must work harmoniously together.

Stanislavski explained that an actor's approach to a character differs only in the given circumstances that surrounded that character. The key was not to concentrate on what emotions to portray, but rather, what to do.

Action

An action was an attempt to achieve an objective. The attempt could be a physical movement or an act of thinking or feeling. If the objective was "to rest," for example the actor would demonstrate "resting" as he sits in a chair. This demonstration was the action.

Such an action had to happen for a specific reason; something was always being enacted either inwardly or outwardly. The magic if began the process, and concentration of attention on the objectives of the unit provided a sense
of truthfulness to the actions that the character was carrying out.

Communion

The actor was always to be communicating with himself, the audience, an object, another actor, or all at once. This relationship Stanislavski called "communion." First, an actor had understand what he was feeling, what he was trying to accomplish, and what he wanted from the actor or actors with whom the stage is shared. Once an actor understood his objectives, he was ready to convey them to all others who participated in the theatrical experience.

The actor had to be always in contact with those who shared the scene. One could not simply wait for the cue lines spoken by the other actor and then be in character. The actor had to listen and concentrate on the feelings of the others sharing the scene. In short, the actor must listen and try to make those who share the stage listen and understand him.

Finally, the actor had to convey his ideas to the audience. This contact could not be established and maintained unless the actor listened and responded to what the other actors on stage were saying. Only when the actor understands and honestly attempted to communicate his inner
feelings and motives could the audience understand the performance.

Such ideas were actually the same common sense concepts taught in most introductory courses in communication in colleges and universities today. Interpersonal communication -- communication with another -- and intrapersonal communication -- understanding oneself -- were the foundations of the communication process. Stanislavski understood this and it was only obvious that these principles would be represented in his discussion of communication between actors and between actors and the audience under the heading of adaptation.

Adaptation

Adaptation was the "inner and 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" (Stanislavski 1964, 224). Adaptation occurred when one needed to be noticed by others, when the actor's partner needed to be prepared to respond to his actions. It also occurred when words were not enough to express the inner feelings and the whole persona of the character was used to convey those feelings.
The major adaptation the actor made was to the given circumstances, which could change from one performance to the next. Each night one's fellow actors came to the stage, their moods, their health, even their approach to the play might be different. Since the circumstances differ from night to night, the actor could not become locked into movements and motivations in the rehearsals. The actor had to be willing to adapt to new happenings on the stage.

Stanislavski also wrote that nature is the most powerful source of adaptation. One had to obey nature and not force false attempts at adaptation. Even in the act of adapting the actor had to use a sense of truth. The thoughts and gestures of the actor have to be true to the character and faithful to the life of the human being performing the role. The actor had to understand what he was feeling and deal with the feelings in a fashion that was appropriate to the play and to the character. Just as important as understanding oneself was the ability to communicate these feelings to others while reacting to the other's actions.

**Emotion Memory**

This concept, although number nine in importance to the overall work of the actor's psycho-technique, became the
cornerstone of the most common interpretations of the Stanislavski System. Many critics attacked emotion memory as an agonizing over terrible memories buried in the psyche of the actor. Fortunately, that was not what emotion memory was.

Emotion memory was the type of memory that made an actor relive the sensations he had once felt at any particular instance in his life. These sensations came from many types of experience. Each experience left a person with the memories of the strongest aspect of the occurrence. Stanislavski provides a clarification of emotion memory when he wrote "It is a kind of synthesis of memory on a large scale. It is purer, more condensed, compact, substantial and sharper than the actual happenings" (1964, 173). Time provided a filter through which one might turn realistic memories into poetry. These purified memories were what one used to create the inner truth of a role. The actor took from himself the best that he possessed and presented it upon the stage.

The fact that the actor could use what he had experienced was not a limitation, but actually a marvelous opportunity to use the surroundings presented him by the playwright, the designers and the director in a fashion that stimulates memories appropriate to the scene at hand.
Memories were gained not only from direct experience but also from witnessing events and receiving reports of the event through news media or the recollections of others. All of these produced emotional reactions that could be used when utilizing emotion memory in creating the role.

Many critics of Stanislavski have contended that he wanted his actors to lose themselves in the emotion. This emotional involvement is a central point in many of the attacks on the Stanislavski system. But just as these critics warn of the dangers of losing one's self in the role, Stanislavski warned of the same danger. He admonished his students to act in their own person, as an artist. In fact, Stanislavski felt that to lose oneself in a character was the beginning of false acting. It was in the infinite variety of combinations of ways to achieve the objective of the play that produced an artistic performance (Stanislavski 1964, 177).

Stanislavski encouraged the actor to live a life that was full of experiences. Travel and observation were musts for the successful actor. The more experiences one accumulated the larger the reservoir that would be available when choosing which emotions were correct in any one moment in the play. Yet, he also explained that while the actor used the emotion memory as a rehearsal technique, it could
not be relied upon night after night in performance. He warned that undergoing such stress night after night would lead to mental breakdown. The rehearsal provided the actor with information as to how much emotion was needed for a particular scene. He then cut all but the necessary emotion from the performance (Stanislavski 1964, 187-188).

As a further aid in creating emotion memories, the actor had to be cognizant of the set that he performs upon. Stanislavski posited that the lights, the sound, the set, and the costumes were more for the benefit of the actor than the audience. The surroundings he was given could provide stimuli for the memories needed in the scene and thus a wonderful range of emotions to draw upon. The actor could never forget that he was on a stage but rather he could use that fact to aid him in the creation of his role. Each object, each property, every piece of scenery could serve as a stimulus for an emotion memory.

Additionally, the actor had to continue to develop a belief in the physical actions he undertook while on the stage. If one was in hiding, this fact had to stimulate a memory of hiding. If the action was dancing, then the act of dancing could awaken the memory to a feeling once achieved when dancing. Emotion memory was not just a scary mental process but a way of opening the door to the variety
of possibilities that exist within the artist. The system was not rooted in emotion memory, but was built upon a logical, thoughtful, planned approach in which emotion memory served as one of many tools.

Inner Creative Forces

The execution of the psycho-technique advocated by Stanislavski depended upon three factors: feelings, the mind, and the will. He urged his students to "feel your part and instantly all your inner chords harmonize, your whole bodily apparatus of expression will begin to function" (Stanislavski 1964, 244). However, feelings were not always reliable. As discussed earlier, there were times when the actor could not call up his feelings easily. At such times, one calls upon the will.

The actor was taught to exhibit feelings upon the stage in order to enact the character for the audience. But the actor was also a human being and sometimes he could not feel the necessary emotion. There are days when nothing has gone right and the person portraying the character could not go through the process to experience the feelings. At such times the will took over. The "will" is that part of the actor which might be called dedication to the art or the determination not to let down his fellow actors and his art.
The will stimulated the mind to discover other avenues for approaching the role.

The mind was the mechanism that generated creativity. It was where the imagination resided and where the given circumstances were analyzed. When the feelings failed, the actor’s recourse was imagination. An actor understood what was required through his analysis of character and given circumstances. Through observation of life, the actor perceived what would be considered truthful in the external presentation of the character. The mind was the actor’s safety net. When the feelings failed, the external characterization could be substituted.

As the character went through the external realities of the character, these in turn began to connect with the actor’s feelings and as a result produced feelings for the character. When the actor learned to use all three aspects of his inner creative force in conjunction, he could bring together all the elements of the art of acting.

Logic and Continuity

In a play the stream of minor objectives, imaginative thoughts, feelings, and actions of an actor should converge to carry out the “super-objective” of the plot. The super objective was the core idea the playwright wished to express
through the play. The performance of the actor had to be logical when viewed in relation to the other actions in the play. The various performances of the actors must be in keeping with the continuity of the overall story. As the actor evaluated the given circumstances of each unit he had to keep in mind that the actions taken early in the play must provide a path to the end. The common bond had to be strong because even the most insignificant detail, if it were not related to the super-objective, might stand out as superfluous or incorrect (Stanislavski 1964, 271).

The External Technique

It was always Stanislavski’s view that the actor should strive for a truthful characterization based in nature. But when he spoke of nature, Stanislavski meant more than a realistic performance. Nature was the actor’s aid as he seeks to discover the correct mask to use as he portrayed the character. The gestures, costumes, speech patterns, and movement, which constituted the actor’s “mask,” had to be natural for the character. Using the given circumstances of the production the actor determines what mask to use in the performance. When these circumstances became real for the character, in the reality established by all the theatrical elements of the production, the performance would have
approached nature and truth. This psycho-physical, or external technique, described the steps the actor took in portraying the character with a truthful physical characterization.

Relaxation of Muscles

Stanislavski began his discussion of muscular relaxation with an example of the dangers for the actor caused by unnecessary tension. The story was told of an actor allowing himself to place too much pressure on a glass during a particularly tense scene. The glass shattered and cut an artery in the actor’s arm (Stanislavski 1964, 95). Although an actual regimen was not spelled out in Stanislavski’s books, application of a movement discipline such as the Alexander Technique which focused on the elimination of unneeded tension and movement, or LeCoq movement focused on the body as neutral instrument would have been most applicable to Stanislavski teachings.

An actor was called upon to do many physical activities during the course of a play. A person with unnecessary tension in the body could not land correctly when performing a fall, safely throw a punch in a choreographed fight, or even be assured of safely crossing the stage. Additionally, unnecessary tension might adversely affect the external
portrayal of the character and send an incorrect message to the audience.

To drive home the difficulty of performing with extraneous tension, Stanislavski’s character, Tortsov, had his students attempt to pick up the end of a piano while reciting lines from a play or singing. All of the students failed. The idea is that while the physical apparatus is devoting its energies to one activity, it could not be devoted to another activity (Stanislavski 1964, 99). And building on a concept that had been introduced earlier, Stanislavski wrote that the actor would have to devote much concentration on the action he was performing in order to eliminate unneeded movement and tension.

Stanislavski explained that the actor was seeking the same relaxed state that animals and infants have. If a cat were placed upon the sand and then carefully lifted, the impression in the sand would be of the whole body of the animal. An adult human placed in the same sand, after years of bad posture, and a tension filled life, would leave only an impression of the shoulder blades and the rump (Stanislavski 1964, 101). Through exercises that aided in development of the ability to relax all but those muscles required in a performance, the actor insured that only the correct muscles would be used at the correct time.
Expressive Body Training

The first priority for an actor was to maintain the instrument by which his art was performed. Stanislavski recommended gymnastics, or dance, or some form of movement training so the actor could maintain his body's fitness. A musician takes pains to ensure that the instrument he plays is maintained and tuned in order to produce the proper notes. The actor's instrument was his body. The actor had to maintain his body so that it would be prepared for whatever demands a role might make. The actor needed a strong body but not one developed to excess. An actor with the body of a professional body builder would have difficulty in physically portraying a weakling. The purpose of a physical fitness regimen should be to correct the body and not to exaggerate it. The actor was encouraged to take classes such as gymnastics to increase stamina and body tone. Dance classes were also recommended as a means of increasing expressiveness in the body. Expressiveness is an important tool in the creation of the role. The body must be molded to the character. Only a well-tuned body could be molded.

Plasticity
In life each person possessed idiosyncrasies which define what and who he was. On the stage an actor could not afford to allow these defining characteristics to define the character falsely. The character might be an individual who has no strange mannerisms when walking. However, if the actor did have peculiarities and has made no effort to correct them, the character would then inherit the mannerisms and so would not be the character the playwright conceived. Plasticity was the ability of an actor to mold himself into a character.

Stanislavski discussed the importance of developing a neutral instrument capable of taking on the idiosyncrasies of the character discovered in the analysis of given circumstances. The character was the individual who should dictate the internal processes at work. The actor should have at his command an instrument capable of manifesting the outward consequences of the internal processes at work in the character. This is plasticity (Stanislavski, 1977, 64).

Voice and Speech

Stanislavski differentiated voice from speech. Work on the voice included such areas as breathing, placement of the voice, and singing. Speech focused enunciation and the placement of vowel and consonant sounds in the mouth.
Attention was also paid to the accent of words and the ways that meaning could be changed simply by changing the accents upon the words. The voice had to be as well trained as the body in order to produce the neutral instrument. Even the rate with which one speaks must be thoughtfully planned for the achievement of the desired effect (Stanislavski 1977, 164-165).

External Tempo Rhythm

Tempo was the speed with which the units in a play were performed. Rhythm was the regular recurrence of grouped, stressed and unstressed, long and short, or high pitched or low pitched syllables in alternation. Stanislavski divided tempo-rhythm into two categories: tempo-rhythm in movement and speech tempo-rhythm.

Each character had a unique way of moving that helped to define who the character was. The actor searched out the tempo-rhythm that was unique to his character. This rhythm is made up of individual moments of every conceivable length, dividing up the time of a measure into varying parts. Countless permutations, combinations, groupings are possible. The actor had to discover which possibilities best fit the circumstances of the production in which he was performing (Stanislavski 1977, 187).
In discovering the tempo-rhythm one had to go back to the concepts of given circumstances and the magic if. In order to decide upon the correct tempo-rhythms, one had to understand the circumstances one was operating in and adapt to play within those parameters. Utilizing the correct tempo-rhythm could prompt the emotion memory. (Stanislavski 1977, 196-197).

Every human emotion and experience possessed its own tempo-rhythm. In discovering those tempos and rhythms the actor discovered the truth of the character he portrayed. This revelation facilitated the construction of the throughline of action by creating an unbroken string of moments that corresponded correctly with the character’s experiences and motivations in accomplishing his objectives.

Stanislavski maintained that if the actor intuitively sensed what was being said and performed on stage, the correct tempo-rhythm was created immediately. But he also recognized that this achievement was not always possible and so he explained the technical means by which a tempo-rhythm could be established. That technique was “from the outside in.” It came from the mind. One consciously examined and set the tempo-rhythm for each unit in a scene or an entire play. This concept recognized the fact that an actor had
sometimes to approach a role cerebrally. The actor was then able to enact the role at the appropriate tempo-rhythm.

Once the correct tempo-rhythm had been established for the character, the appropriate feelings and creativity were actually inspired because the actor would "feel" when an emotion or action was appropriate for the character. The actor understood the rhythm of a character's life and the way in which that character expressed himself. In this way an actor was able to portray the character truthfully with all the motives, emotions, and actions in proper perspective. The character was natural and comfortable in his actions and so the audience is also comfortable with the character.

Stanislavski discussed various ways of accomplishing the correct tempo-rhythms for movement and speech. The important point was that through physical actions the inner feelings of the actor could be aroused. Furthermore, the interdependence of the physical and the psychological was an integral concept repeated in all three books in which the Stanislavski system was described.

Restraint and Control

Restraint and control were the natural concepts to flow out of the tempo-rhythm and was actually an explanation of
the importance of understanding and controlling gestures so that they corresponded to the needs of a character without revealing the idiosyncrasies of the actor. There are several movement training regimens that would help the actor to eliminate unnecessary physical gestures which had become habitual. The important point to remember here is that one must control unneeded movement.

It was also important not to force the characterization. One had to take time to get to know a character. The actor had to refrain from locking in fixed motives, gestures, and actions early on. As discussed earlier, the actions taken by human beings would be different from night to night. The actor wanted to understand the character fully in order to eliminate the extraneous from the performance and to facilitate adaptation to any new occurrence on the stage. The actor had to practice restraint, and control the extraneous in pursuit of the actual life of the character. This was what Stanislavski meant by “living the part.” It was not necessarily reliving actual experiences of the actor, but rather living the experiences that were natural and true to the character.
Stage Charm

Finally, Stanislavski explained the philosophical approach an actor should take toward his art. Under this philosophy were the concepts of stage charm, discipline, ethics, and sense of ensemble.

Stanislavski discussed the fact that there were some actors who enthralled the viewing public no matter how good or bad their performance. They possessed some inexplicable quality which endeared them to an audience. Even deficiencies were overlooked and sometimes even called assets. The advantage of such gifts were obvious. But there was also a danger in such a gift. Unless an actor understood the use of such natural gifts and practices restraint and control over them, he would run many risks.

Initially, he might become accustomed to the adoration which this charm provoked and carry over his act into his personal life. When this happened his reputation among his peers would become that of a fake who used his abilities to further his own ends at the expense of others. But a far worse sin followed close behind. When the actor became so enamored of his own charm, he feared losing it. He began to hide himself in that characterization regardless of the role he played. What was once an artist would become a
The monotonous actor unable to bring truth to his role. And the very adoration he sought to maintain would be turned toward other actors whom the audience could admire. The actor would have lost that which he sought most to ensure. The moral here was that an actor could not put himself before the art of creation. Once the creation stopped the art became stagnant.

Then there were those actors who were the exact opposite of the first type. Everything they did repulsed an audience. There was hope for such persons but Stanislavski admits that the hope was limited. These were the actors who had to work the hardest, understand their own shortcomings, and understand human nature most. Their only hope was to tone down their disagreeable qualities and turn them into assets through the types of characters they portrayed. The patience and persistence required of these individuals were extraordinary. It was easy to understand why all but the most dedicated to the art would give up. But with the persistence came appreciation. Again, it was the dedication to the art that saved the actor. The dedication of the actor to his art was beautiful in itself. Stanislavski maintained that "art lends beauty and nobility, and whatever is beautiful and noble has the power to attract" (Stanislavski, 1977, 248).
There were also actors who in everyday life did not possess a great charm but once in costume and make-up became magnetic personalities. These artists utilized the given circumstances to create a charm faithful to the role at hand. These were perhaps the luckiest of actors for they have a well-adjusted life on and off the stage. These actors were talented but also worked for the gifts the natural is born with. As with the other two types, it is the love of the art which should propel the actor. One had to begin the process of building the character anew each time he took on a new role.

Discipline, Ethics, and a Sense of Ensemble

Only the most disciplined person would succeed in this art of acting. Part of that discipline lay in certain guiding principles which the artist should follow in producing his art.

The first was to "love art in yourself and not yourself in art" (Stanislavski 1977, 250). The career of the actor who was truly devoted to the art and understood it was a glory. The true artist was not enamored of success. The theater artist's true passion lay in the acquisition of the knowledge and techniques by which the creative possibilities of his art might be realized.
Secondly, the true artist had to recognize that acting and the theater in general constituted a way of life. It was not a game one played at for a few hours and then went on with his life. The art was his life. The artist spent countless hours in the production of the beautiful and artistic. Anything he did outside the theater colored his success inside the theater. Stanislavski explained that everyone involved in the theatre, including the doorman, the janitor, and the secretary, as well as the performers were responsible to the art. They were all contributing to the creation of a piece of art. And as a co-creator, one had to live one’s life in a way that would not hinder the presentation of the actors or the reception of the art by those observing it (Stanislavski 1977, 267).

Putting the System into Action

Creating a Role was an interesting opportunity to examine Stanislavski’s system of creating the character utilizing the techniques laid out in An Actor Prepares and Building a Character. In this volume, the reader was treated to not just one, but three versions of the same book. Elizabeth Reynolds Hapgood explained that the three parts into which the book was divided provided us with a glimpse at the method in which Stanislavski approached
several roles. Additionally, the three versions demonstrated the ways in which he changed his approach from the first version, part one, dating from the years 1916 - 1920, to his later work represented in the second and third sections of the book dating from the 1930's.

One of the major differences was the manner in which information was presented. In the first section was a style of straightforward narrative. In the other two sections Stanislavski used the form utilized in An Actor Prepares which was a transcript of a fictional class being instructed by the master Tortsov.

But there were similarities that could be seen in all three sections. In both part one and part two there were chapters dealing with the first impression an actor gets of a script. The idea was that an actor should resist learning anything about the play in order to avoid preconceived opinions that might lock him into an approach that would lead to an unfaithful portrayal of the character. The first reading had to be with a neutral state of mind that allowed a play to make its own impressions on the actor, who should never force the characterization but rather should let it evolve.
Although the third section of *Creating a Role* did not deal directly with the first acquaintance of an actor with the role, the subject was incorporated into the preliminary discussion of what was available to an actor on first acquaintance with a new role. Concepts such as expressing the plot with simple physical objectives was a refined version of the process of allowing the given circumstances to dictate the proper creative state whereby the actor took the correct physical movements to evoke a sincere portrayal of the character.

Secondly, the creation of external details as a means of defining the physical life of the role was discussed in each of the three sections. If one examined the table of contents, one found that in Part One it was called “Putting life into External Circumstance,” and Part Two names it “Creating the Physical life of a Role.” Then, in Part Three an integrated discussion of turning physical actions into the living image of the actor comprised the entire section. The teacher Tortsov explained to his students that, “you must beforehand pour into your prepared inner creative state the actual feelings of the life of your part, not just the spiritual but also the physical sensations” (Stanislavski 1989). Later in the class, when asked by one of the
students what is available as an actor approaches a new role for the first time, the teacher responds:

You can convey the externals of the plot with its episodes, with its simplest physical objectives. At first that is all you can execute sincerely. If you attempt anything more you will run into objectives beyond your powers, and then you run the risk of going astray, of overacting and doing violence to your nature. Beware of too difficult objectives to start with - you are not yet ready to penetrate deep into the soul of your part. Keep strictly inside the narrow confines of physical actions, search out their logic and consecutiveness, and try to find the state of "I am..." (Stanislavski 1989, 215-216).

In this volume it was clear that the system was an integration of the various parts. To separate the psychological from the physical was impossible, one feeds off the other. In his discussion of preparing for all three roles discussed in the book the disciplines taught in *An Actor Prepares* and *Building a Character* were used as a necessary and systematic approach in the creation of the complete character.
The physical life and the inner life were intertwined and interdependent. Stanislavski believed that the proper inner emotion would inspire the correct outer gestures. He recognized the fact that an actor could not always call up these emotions on demand. When the inner processes failed to trigger the necessary emotions, the physical technique was required to produce both truthful movement and truthful emotion. This point was missed in many criticisms (Hornby 1992, Aldridge 1993, Whelan 1996) of Stanislavski's teaching. The fact that Building a Character was not published in the United States until 1948 provided a reason for the misinterpretation credited to the Group Theatre and other groups in America trying to utilize Stanislavski's system. The second half of the system was unknown in the United States. Only later did different members of the Group actually visit Stanislavski and realize that they were not teaching his system.

Modern writers such as Aldridge, who had the complete system in print, continued to accuse the Stanislavski System of locking a character into one style of theater -- realism. Worse yet was the assertion that the system focused on a painful psychological approach (Richardson 1988). Stanislavski produced plays in all styles. And in the
production of these plays he taught a system that balances and utilizes both the physical and the psychological.

The Stanislavskian actor approached the role intellectually. First, one examined the given circumstances. Once the given circumstances were understood, the actor began to plan how he would adapt himself to those circumstances through the application of the various tools within the system. The given circumstances would dictate the strategy for creating the character.

Understanding that values of the production such as set design or director’s interpretations are items which the actor has little or no control over and so must he adapt to those circumstances. The objectives of a character is one area in which the actor does have control. The next chapter in this study will examine how the actor controls his art in non-realistic theatrical situations. In the first section the given circumstances of Brechtian drama will be discussed. Brecht was chosen because he has so often been considered to be the antithesis of what Stanislavski stood for. It will be demonstrated how an actor trained in the Stanislavski system would prepared not only to act in Brecht’s plays but perhaps even to achieve what Brecht himself acknowledged had not been achieved. The
Stanislavski system can produce the Brechtian actor. The second section will apply the Stanislavski System to the given circumstances in the works of Pinter and Beckett.

Finally, the work of Jerzy Grotowski is discussed in terms of his roots in Stanislavski and how that work, which took on its own form, is actually a fulfillment of Stanislavski's own admonitions.
APPLYING THE STANISLAVSKI SYSTEM TO NON-REALISTIC DRAMA

The given circumstances of a play must be established before an actor begins to adapt himself to his role in the production. This chapter examines the given circumstances of non-realistic theatre in general and specifically explores the goals of Brecht's Epic Theatre, the absurdist playwrights Samuel Beckett and Harold Pinter, and the modern theorist and teacher Jerzy Grotowski.

The realistic playwrights sought to portray life as it was in everyday life in sets that look like real rooms and scripts that utilized dialogue like that of everyday life. An example of such drama would be Strindberg's Miss Julie and Ibsen's A Doll's House. Non-realistic playwrights attempted to do away with actualistic scenery set and dialogue, and focus upon the dramaturgic or production issues that the particular style of non-realistic theater believe essential. For instance, expressionists opposed realism on the grounds that it focused attention on the surface details and implied that what people observe in the characters of a play or in society in general represented
"the truth." The expressionists believe that the only source of value was the spiritual nature of humanity. Since truth existed in the subjective realm, expressionists sought to express themselves through mechanical movement, telegraphic speech, and exaggerated shape in stage design and costume.

The symbolist playwrights believed that truth could not be represented directly and literally as the realists attempted to do. Symbolism held that truth was only evoked through symbols, legends, and moods. To this end, the actors had to speak in chants like priests and use highly stylized gestures. Even the characters in plays were exaggerations of stereotypes in order to point up the inhumanity of man. For instance, in Maurice Maeterlinck's 1892 production *Pelleas and Melisande*, a man killed his brother when he found out that his wife was in love with the brother. In Maeterlinck's production the love triangle was not the focus; rather, the mood of mystery that surrounded the story was set in place by devices such as doves flying away from a tower, a wedding ring dropped into a fountain, or shadows enveloping the set (Brockett 1995, 443.)

In the twentieth century, non-realistic theatre continued to find new means of expression. However, when each new style of theatre was examined closely, it differed
from realism most profoundly in its scenic elements; the differences in the acting requirements were few. The outward presentation of the expressionist may be of a more stylized nature than the realistic everyday representation of realism but the actors training to successfully portray the roles did not need to change. To a student of the Stanislavski system the preparation would have been the same: understand the goal of the playwright combined with the concept of the designers and director, and adapt himself and his character to these circumstances. This idea will be clarified in the following discussions of Brecht’s Epic Theatre, the absurdist plays of Beckett and Pinter, and the innovations of Jerzy Grotowski.

Achieving Brecht’s Alienation Effect Utilizing The Stanislavski System

Epic theatre was pioneered by Erwin Piscator, who sought to create a proletarian drama rather than producing standard plays for the working-class audience. He used such devices as film sequences, cartoons, and treadmills to draw parallels between events in the world and the actions on the stage in an attempt to spark changes in society (Brockett
1995, 474). Today, however, the figure most associated with Epic Theatre is Bertolt Brecht.

Born in 1898 in Augsburg, Germany, Brecht studied at the University of Munich for a short time before becoming a hospital orderly during World War I. His first play was Baal, written in 1918. His prize winning play Drums in the Night followed in 1922. Although these early works resembled the plays of the expressionists, by 1928 he began to create his own style of production beginning with The Threepenny Opera, The Rise and Fall of the City of Mahogany, and The Mother. Influenced both by the open staging of the Elizabethan theatre and the narrative techniques of Chinese theatre, Brecht’s plays sought to create an objective attitude in the audience so that instruction could follow.

Brecht in describing his theater presupposed that the actors were already trained. His descriptions of the Epic Theater pertained to the whole production of which the actor was but a part. The actors in pre World War II Germany were highly skilled and trained and with these artists he began to formulate his dramaturgic theories. A key point when discussing Brecht’s actors was that they were greatly influenced by Stanislavski.
Stanislavski focused on the training of the actor. He described a process whereby an actor could prepare to perform in any style of theater. Whatever the play’s style, an actor would examine the goals of the playwright and director and study the given circumstances of the play. Then he would carefully lay out a course for achieving his character's goals. And with each new play would come a new set of circumstances that would dictate the performance. This approach did not contradict Brecht; rather it provided a method for achieving his goals.

Given this linkage between Stanislavski and Brecht why were they thought to be opposite poles on the sphere of acting? The answer to this question comes in two parts. First, one must understand the political environment in which the two men lived. Brecht, a native of Germany, was the employee and subject of a government that fostered an innate distrust of anything from the Soviet Union. In 1953, a spokesman for the German Communist Party declared Brecht’s theories to be “undeniably in opposition to everything the name Stanislavski stands for” (Bentley, 1987).

The second reason was, again, the problem of publication of Stanislavski’s books. The three books that completely outline the Stanislavski system were each published in different decades. The focus of the first book
to be published was the inner preparation of the actor. And just as first impressions of individuals cloud our judgment, this first book formed a permanent impression of the Stanislavski system. This fact was born out in Aldridge's study of the most often used textbooks in actor training at American universities. While the three books were among the top twelve texts used, they are not used together. An Actor Prepares, for instance, which was ranked number two, is used by 113 of the respondents while the sixth-ranked Building a Character was utilized by only 82 of the respondents. Additionally, Creating a Role was ranked eighth and used by only 68 of the respondents (Aldridge 1993, 38).

Understanding the given circumstances in a play by Brecht, the Stanislavskian actor would study the conventions and practices of Chinese theatre and wrestle with the difficulties of acting on a stage with only the minimum of set pieces, which characterized Elizabethan drama. There would be no change in the requirement that the actor must understand the needs, objectives, and emotions of the character. As McKinney (534) pointed out, Brecht's plays were not solely rational discussions of issues but were full of emotion. Their challenge lay in how an actor could express the emotions suggested by the script.
Richard Brestoff (1995) wrote that when Brecht was young, the dominant realistic style of acting in Germany was based on the Stanislavski System. Brecht believed that realism put both the actors and the audience into a hypnotic state that removed them from the real world and placed them in a world of make believe that held no person or group accountable. Brecht preferred a theater of physicalization, a concept very similar to beliefs held by Stanislavski.

Brecht maintained that the audience for Epic Theater had to be forced to respond by recognizing the oddity of an event or the cruelty with which human beings treat their fellows (Clark 1965, 309). The actor’s job was to avoid losing himself in his character, and to remember always that he was an actor playing a role on a stage before an audience. According to Brecht, an actor had to alienate himself from the character. That is, he should not feel the emotions of a character but rather provide a demonstration of the action supposedly completed by his character. A performance was primarily a demonstration of events or circumstances, rather than those events or circumstances themselves. Since the goal of an Epic Theatre production was to instruct its audience, the spectators could not be allowed to slip into a suspension of disbelief. They had to be kept aware of the instruction in such a way that they
were forced to come to grips with the problems and solutions being demonstrated.

To keep the actor and the audience from empathizing with the characters, all elements of production were to be in plain view of the audience. Lighting instruments, stage hands moving set pieces, and perhaps even costume changes were to be visible to the audience. Brecht rejected the Aristotelian idea of a purgation of emotion. The audience should not feel with the character and there should be no emotional tie between character and audience. The audience learned from the demonstration they were observing. Through this learning process, Brecht hoped to achieve a number of social reforms.

On a superficial level, Epic Theater would seem to have been aiming in the opposite direction from Stanislavski's system. Brecht asserted that the first requirement of alienation was that an actor must learn to show his thoughts instead of hiding them behind his character. Neither the actor nor the audience was lost in emotion. Their minds were free to recognize the message (Brecht 1992, 136-137).

In The Modern Theatre is the Epic Theatre, Brecht (1992, 37) provides a table outlining the change of emphasis
between the "Dramatic Theatre" and the "Epic Theatre." This table appears below.

Table II

Dramatic Theatre vs. Epic Theatre

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DRAMATIC THEATRE</th>
<th>EPIC THEATRE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Plot</td>
<td>Narrative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Implicates the spectator in a stage</td>
<td>Turns the spectator into an observer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>situation</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wears down his capacity for action</td>
<td>Arouses his capacity for action</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provides him with sensations</td>
<td>Forces him to make decisions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The spectator is involved in something</td>
<td>He is made to face something</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suggestion</td>
<td>Argument</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Instinctive feelings are preserved</td>
<td>Brought to the point of recognition</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table continues
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DRAMATIC THEATRE</th>
<th>EPIC THEATRE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The spectator is in the thick of it, shares the experience</td>
<td>The spectator stands outside, studies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The human being is taken for granted</td>
<td>The human being is the object of the inquiry</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>He is unalterable</td>
<td>He is alterable and able to alter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eyes on the finish</td>
<td>Eyes on the course</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>One scene makes another</td>
<td>Each scene for itself</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Growth</td>
<td>Montage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Linear development</td>
<td>In curves</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evolutionary determinism</td>
<td>Jumps</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Man as a fixed point</td>
<td>Man as a process</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thought determines being</td>
<td>Social being determines thought</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feeling</td>
<td>Reason</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This table provided no reason to conclude that the Stanislavski System could not be used for epic theatre. We are presented the goals of the playwright. Both styles of
theater required deliberate thought and planning for their execution. A Stanislavskian actor would have no problem in either the dramatic form or the epic form with its goal of alienation. The key lay in understanding the character in terms of his given circumstances.

Given the similarities between Brecht's goals and those of Stanislavski, just how did the actor achieve alienation, or distancing, from his character and actually perform the role? An individual performing in a Brechtian production had to be either in complete agreement with the message in the play or "acting" like a person who believes in the message. The actor hoping to achieve alienation had to first become a person with a cause. This crusader was not the character in the play but the actor himself. In other words, the person acting in Brecht's plays actually had to perform two roles: the "actor-character" performing the play and the "character" provided in the play. To act in a Brechtian production, therefore, was to perform a fictional character on stage who was playing a fictional character in a play. This double layer of characterization prevented the audience from empathizing with the character in the play because that empathy went to the invisible actor-character assumed by the performer.
In effect the actor-character became a demonstration of the point to be made. The audience did not feel with the playwright's character but with the viewpoint demonstrated by the actor-character. The audience was distanced from feeling with the character because they were actually empathizing with the actor-character they did not even realize was on the stage. The audience joined the actor-character's histrionic ruminations on the problem being exposed by the play.

To create this contemplation, Brecht wanted to make the events on the stage strange enough to make the audience ask questions about them. In Epic Theatre the episodes of the play were to be separated by songs, narrative passages commenting on the action, even billboards with captions referencing the next scene. Lighting instruments, stage hands, musicians, and scene changes were as simple and as visible as possible. By focusing the audience's attention away from the theatre and onto the ills of society which were the subject of the play, Brecht hoped to lead the audience to taking action to remedy those ills.

How might Brechtian acting have fit into the Stanislavski System? The system required actors to study the given circumstances of both a play and its present production. Understanding that he must play both the actor-
character and the playwright’s character, a Stanislavskian actor would concentrate on the actor-character and his objectives.

Examined carefully, the theories of Stanislavski and Brecht appeared to differ only in the fact that Stanislavski concentrated on acting and Brecht on overall production. Indeed, Stanislavski cautioned against finalizing a character too quickly. He believed one should approach the first reading with no preconception and let the character grow throughout the rehearsal process. This approach would certainly have worked to achieve the alienation effect and Epic acting.

A person trained in the Stanislavski System therefore, would be uniquely suited for the assumption of Bertolt Brecht’s dual role requirements. The performer would concentration the objectives of the actor-character instead of the character written in the play. The Stanislavski System teaches its actors to create the circumstances that would make the actor-character real. It would be his feelings that are being exposed when he demonstrated the story told in the play.

There was nothing in the theories of Bertolt Brecht that would preclude an actor trained in the complete
Stanislavski System from effectively performing in a Brechtian production. When one looks at the ideals the two men had in common, such as a belief in mankind, truthfulness as a duty of the artist, and the artist's responsibility to society, one realizes that the two were not far apart. Eric Bentley summed up this argument when he wrote:

Incidentally, Brecht never considered that "epic" acting had really been achieved either by the Berlin Ensemble or anyone else. So there is his own authority for saying there are no Brechtian actors. Evidently what he had was a vision of what acting might become, given not only changes on stage, but also in the auditorium. Should that vision ever be realized, it is conceivable that Stanislavsky may prove to have been one of the contributors to it (Bentley 1987, 134).

Stanislavski And The Theatre Of The Absurd

Absurdist theater began with the Dadaist movement. Dada was a style of theater that demonstrated an irrational, anarchic, and the existentialist view of the world. Dadaism eventually led to such theories as Artaud's Theater of Cruelty and, the subject of this chapter, Theater of the Absurd.
Absurdist theater had its roots in the philosophy of existentialism. Existentialists believed that man led a purposeless existence in a purposeless world. The genre highlighted the struggle of the individual as he attempted to find his way through the hopeless situation known as "life."

Absurdist plays were therefore focused on characters. The play’s apparent lack of logical patterns and plot left nothing upon which to concentrate but the characters. This existential focal point on "the self" required actors who could concentrate on the desires and the objectives of a fictional character. The objective may have been nothing more than "existing in the now," but nevertheless it was an objective.

This section will examine the use of the Stanislavski System when acting in the absurdist plays of Samuel Beckett and Harold Pinter.

Acting Pinter Using the Stanislavski System

Harold Pinter was one of the most influential of twentieth-century English playwrights. Pinter's characters were "observed with an impartial eye, but their motives often remain obscure, their backgrounds indefinite, and their fate at the end of the play indeterminate" (Hartnoll
1995, 640). Pinter was able to take the existential view that man leads a purposeless existence and translate that view of humanity to the stage. His plays are full of unresolved situations, unrelieved tensions, and characters left to continue their search for a purpose for their existence.

The plays of Pinter did not possess the psychological development of character that one had found in realistic dramas. Pinter’s plays did not resolve tensions, achieve solutions, or create a significant change in circumstances, which was the usual outcome of a realistic structure, but ended in moments of stasis, usually achieved by motionless tableau at the end of the final scene. Pinter’s works did not have the circular form of such absurdist plays as Beckett’s Waiting for Godot, but neither did they have the vertical movement toward a resolution found in realistic plays. Pinter aimed for the quality of a failed orgasm: Some stimulation had occurred, tension had been aroused, but no release took place and one was not quite sure why; yet there was an awful sense that another attempt would achieve the same lack of result, after the same grueling effort (Harrop & Epstein 1990, 227-240).

The existentialist ideas that permeated Pinter’s work were a key to the acting of his plays -- a point upon which
most of his critics agree. Again, the Stanislavski actor
had to approach the character by first understanding the
circumstances surrounding the basis of the genre -- a search
for meaning to one's life.

Sartre wrote that men act for individual purposes and
that "each one has his reasons: for one, art is a flight;
for another, a means of conquering" (1955, 1054). This
observation described Pinter's characters and their
objectives: they fled and they sought to conquer. In The
Caretaker, Davie was fleeing the world that had stolen his
job, his identity, in essence his life. As he came into
Aston's life and Aston gave him a place to live, Davie took
the opportunity to position himself in a place of power
place in the house. This idea of simultaneously fleeing and
conquering would provide an actor with obvious objectives to
strive to accomplish on the stage.

The Stanislavskian actor would find no impediment to
creating a Pinter character along the lines taught by the
Stanislavski system. First, as he approached Pinter's work,
the actor would understand that the character was looking
for a purpose for his existence in a purposeless universe.
Secondly, the actor would discover what it was that the
character was fleeing. For instance, Stanley, in The
Birthday Party, was trying to escape from two killers but
instead he was destroyed by the strangers who drove his individuality away. As the strangers led Stanley back, Petey began a pathetic attempt to stop the men but backed down in the face of their overwhelming power. Man’s ineffectual existence was reaffirmed.

These were all objectives that an actor could identify. There was nothing to prevent him from breaking the scene into smaller units. He would develop reasons for each action. Although it was true that the audience might not gain an Aristotelian purgation of emotion, such an achievement was not the actor’s job here. The playwright seeks to demonstrate the purposeless existence of humanity, and if the audience feels unsatisfied at the end of the demonstration, that is the author’s intention. The actor had to play the character within the world the playwright creates. The actor who did his job properly would understand the character’s motives and develop a throughline of action for himself.

The actor in Pinter’s plays still operate under a set of given circumstances. The playwright had a message, the director had a concept, and the designers had a set, or costumes, or lights through which they seek to express their interpretations of the writer’s message and the director’s
concept. The actor had a character with goals and needs and was presented situations to which he had to react.

The concept of communion was essential to the presentation of Pinter's plays. The language and the situations in his plays required concentration on what was happening on the stage. Each actor had to be in communication with all the other actors. If not, he would become lost in the dialogue. A great deal of the meaning of Pinter's plays was only by implication. An actor had to create a character through a skillful use of the given circumstances within each moment of the play. The result of this shell would lead to "communion." Thus, the actor communicates to the audience. As in life, the action on a stage multiplied relationships. With each act, the world of the play revealed a new face (Sarte 1955, 1055).

The existentialist philosopher recognized that only through a person's experience could he or she understand the world. Pinter provided an audience the opportunity to view the world. The actor in Pinter's plays was given a reality that on the surface appeared realistic. Yet, as in the real world, beneath the exterior lay a world that is not as we know it. The real world was not tidy or neat. Pinter's characters lived in this same world.
An actor in Pinter's plays was faced with the same questions as an actor in Brecht's or an actor in "realistic" drama. What are the given circumstances? Who is the character to be played? What are the character's objectives? Why did he want these objectives? Until the actor solved these questions in his own mind, he could not bring the character to life.

But if Pinter's characters represented the fear and the quest that human beings experiences in life, then it was Samuel Beckett who demonstrated the hopeless absurdity of life. It is Beckett's portrayal of humanity trapped in absurdity that was the subject of the next section.

Acting Beckett Using The Stanislavski System

Samuel Beckett held the existentialist view of the world that others in the absurdist genre held. Basically, his plays portrayed a futility of existence through illogical and meaningless speeches and silences. Dramatic form has been abandoned. Yet, pronouncing the speeches that seemingly have no meaning, characters trudged on a familiar existential search for meaning in a life that had no apparent purpose.

In his work Beckett recognized three sources of human alienation. First was the alienation of the individual from
society; his characters were mostly outcasts or at least were isolated from human society. Second, his characters were also alienated from themselves; the mind/body split was a constant theme in his work, the difficulty in reconciling the potential beauty of existence, which is revealed through the mind, and the inevitable suffering and decay of the body. And this led to the final and overarching issue, the alienation of human beings from their destiny.

They were born to die, a fact that could neither be explained nor escaped. The inexorable passage of time through an infinite space was the frame for all of Beckett's work (Harrop & Epstein 1990, 247-269).

Additionally, Beckett's character always had a super-objective. In Waiting for Godot, Vladimir and Estragon waited. Their waiting was the given circumstances for these characters. While they waited, they complained about their lot in life, consider suicide, have nightmares, and wondered what was to happen when Godot did arrive. The fact that Godot never came, which perpetuated the waiting, was simply another disappointment in the character's life. The Listener in That Time sought to understand the words of the text being examined. This, as Abbot suggested, was "the object of the entire interpretive enterprise" (8).
An actor in Beckett’s plays had the opportunity to utilize the training in plasticity and voice and speech that the System simultaneously provided. The actor had to be acutely aware of the rhythmical nature of the dialogue. The system also prepared the actor to utilize the silences that are placed in the dialogue. In Beckett, the silence was as important as the words. In the physicalization of the character the audience experienced the hopelessness of the situation. The observer empathized with this frustration. The fact that nothing could be done pointed up the purposelessness of the world. When Vladimir and Estragon spoke of hanging themselves, we knew that they would not do so. What would have been the point? The next world might be worse. At the end of Waiting for Godot, even as Vladimir and Estragon acknowledge that they should leave, they stayed, thus reinforcing the uselessness of existence.

Stanislavski, with his concepts of expressive body training, external tempo rhythm, and restraint and control, prepared his actors for the very challenges Beckett and his theater of the absurd presented. The expressive use of body was a requisite in the presentation of the characters. Even as Hamm, in Endgame, attempted to present himself as significant, we see his utter insignificance was apparent. The action of the play required careful control of the
characters if the oppressive mood of the piece were to be conveyed.

*External preparation of the character was essential for Beckett’s plays.* The characters did specific physical activities that indicated the larger picture of despair permeating the work. These actions provided the clues through which the actor could understand the essence of the character. At the same time, the actor had to use his adaptive abilities to react to the absurd actions that were normal in Beckett’s fictional world. Stanislavski had devoted an important part of his physical training of the actor for the appropriate external characterization and the tempo-rhythm of the character.

In another sense, however, Beckett’s characters lived in a world that was all too real. No sentiment was free from attack; pretense is exposed publicly. The audience watched the characters as they struggled to exist in a world that made no sense, and the spectator realized that he is not alone in his struggles. The absurdity to be found in Beckett’s plays was the same absurdity people experience in their lives. The spectators were not alone in their loneliness.
Nothing in the plays of Samuel Beckett precluded the use of Stanislavskian acting. Indeed, the actor trained in Stanislavski's system was uniquely equipped to portray these characters in their existential journey toward nothing. Simply because there was nothing at the end of the road, for them did not mean the character had no dreams. The System actor created the life of the character so that the audience could experience the despair that the uselessness of this life created. Stanislavski concentrated on training the actor to study the character. In fact, When Aldridge wrote that Harrop and Epstein treat absurdist theater as an acting style, she had overlooked the fact that what they are doing is providing the given circumstances for this type of theater. The student was then left to apply the circumstances to the play.

Despite the apparent lack of characterization in his plays, Beckett provided characters to study. Rather than trying to invent new acting techniques for Beckett, the acting teacher would better serve the student, the playwright, and the art of acting by teaching the full system that is explained in An Actor Prepares, Building a Character, and Creating a Role. The next section will explore how this approach also applied to the principles of acting developed by Jerzy Grotowski.
Stanislavski As The Foundation For Grotowski

Aldridge worried that the present focus on Stanislavski’s theories might lead to an over-emphasis on realistic acting. Specifically she cited Jerzy Grotowski as one teacher whose approach should be studied (Aldridge, 1993). In his article, From The Theatre Company To Art As Vehicle, Grotowski discussed his concept of the theater company. He explained that it was correct to begin with Stanislavski, who had developed the modern notion of the theatre company as a foundation for professional work. To begin with Stanislavski was correct because, whatever one’s aesthetic orientation in the field of theatre, it was necessary to understand that Stanislavski had not busied himself with realism, experimental theatre, or the avant-garde; he conducted a solid and systematic work on craft (Richards 1995, 115).

Thus, Grotowski began his studies with those of Stanislavski, taking what he learned from Stanislavski and spending his career exploring the idea of physical actions that Stanislavski focused his attention upon toward the end of his life. Grotowski honored his teacher by heeding his exhortation to go out and make the art his own.
Grotowski’s work in no way negated the past but rather searches in it for the useful tools that might help him in his work. “Create your own method,” wrote Stanislavski, “Don’t depend slavishly on mine. Make up something that will work for you” (Richards, 1995). This is exactly what Grotowski did.

Richards tells us that the central idea of Grotowski’s approach “is a method, or better yet, a practice, finally central to the work of Stanislavski, and later developed by Grotowski; physical actions” (1995, 4). Thus, Grotowski continued to explore the expressive limits of the human body. Certainly, the student of the theatre should study Grotowski’s practice, but first the student had to understand Stanislavski. Only when the student has a firm understanding of the concepts Stanislavski developed in his system could he do as Stanislavski suggested and create his own method. Grotowski sought to develop and understand the precise tools required of a master craftsman. His research continued Stanislavski’s own explorations. In Grotowski’s work thus focused on “Actions” — a performing piece he devised solely from his own premise. The other actor or actors on the stage worked on similarly individual pieces. But since they were all using the same space, they had to adapt to each other so that each performance was given a
measure of attention. The performances were orchestrated into a single piece from which the observer could draw a meaning. It did not matter that the individual actors were working on individual objectives that had nothing to do with the other performers; the audience still derived a meaning.

Stanislavski would not feel that his system had been violated: Adaptation had taken place, communion had taken place. Relaxation of unused muscles occurred, and certainly plasticity and expressive body training were evident in the work of Grotowski.

Today Grotowski works with actors not to prepare a performance but rather to train them to perfect their art. This is the same practice that Stanislavski had finally arrived at toward the end of his life. Grotowski borrows some of Stanislavski's expressions when he conducts his training. The following is an example:

After having seen it, Grotowski spoke to us about what he said Stanislavski called a "truthy." Grotowski said that my "individual structure" was becoming much more truthful, but sometimes simple truth was not enough. As you watched, you could say, "Yes, I believe, something is true - but so what." You were seeing a "truthy." Normally this meant that the subject of the
"individual structure" did not deeply touch the actor. I was working around the wrong event (Richards 1995, 62-63).

But what were the differences between Grotowski and Stanislavski? One was the meaning of "the method of physical actions." Stanislavski sought a way by which the actor could create real life or the natural life of the character on the stage. With Grotowski, physical actions were a tool to be used in making a personal discovery for the one doing the actions. Physical actions were a means for both men; the desired results were different.

Another difference from the Stanislavski System was the purpose of the "character." In Stanislavski's system, the character was a combination of that which the playwright had written and the actor himself. The creation of this living, breathing creature was the goal of the art. For Grotowski however, the character was a shield for the actor to hide behind while he created within a carefully constructed montage of actions on the stage. The audience perceived a character relating to other characters but the actors were actually carrying out their individual process.

Finally, despite these differences, Grotowski's teaching was exactly Stanislavski's in one very important
aspect. Both men taught that both the physical and emotional sides to the system must be taught, understood, and used. Only then could an actor perfect his craft.
CHAPTER IV

CONCLUSIONS, IMPLICATIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Having conducted the above study of Stanislavski's System of acting and the given circumstances present in the philosophy of non-realistic theatre, the answer to the first research question of this study is that the Stanislavski System of acting consisted of a study of both the emotional and the physical manifestation of character derived from an examination of the given circumstances surrounding both the character and the production. The study also found that the Stanislavski System could be used by actors called upon to act within non-realistic production styles. The Stanislavski System is well suited to the needs of an actor in a non-realistic production.

Conclusions

The following conclusions can be drawn from this study:

1. When teaching the Stanislavski system, it is imperative to teach both the emotional side described in An Actor Prepares and the physical side described in

84
2. Building A Character, and how to put the two together as discussed in Creating A Role.

3. The Stanislavski system of acting is not restricted to realism but is also effective in non-realistic productions.

4. Using Stanislavski as a starting point, the actor is better able to understand acting techniques such as Jerzy Grotowski’s in terms of where they began and why they venture into new realms.

5. The Stanislavski System, as Stanislavski pointed out is not necessarily an acting system but rather what great actors do instinctively.

6. Having learned the system, the true student of Stanislavski will continue to explore the art of acting and develop his own approach.

Implications

The following are implications for using Stanislavski’s system in the undergraduate actor training program which can be drawn from this study.

1. The student is cheated of a full education by those who do not teach both the emotional and the physical aspects of Stanislavski’s system.
2. In order to teach the system correctly, the teacher must incorporate the three books which encompass the system.

3. The Stanislavski system can be outlined and taught in undergraduate acting courses.

4. Undergraduates, having learned the entire system, can better determine what sort of training and/or research they wish to undertake beyond the baccalaureate.

5. Traditionally, the aim of liberal arts education has been to provide the student with the best, most truthful information about the subjects taught. Only when the student is given accurate information can he make accurate decisions. Teaching the whole system will benefit the mission of the university, and liberal arts in general, by providing the student the necessary components of the field studied to make true and proper decisions about that field.

6. The art and profession of theatre will benefit from a unified approach to teaching the Stanislavski system because this approach will provide a capability to handle acting challenges of all types.
Recommendations

The following recommendations can be made as a result of this study.

1. Further research should be conducted to identify specific strategies to teach the Stanislavski System as a coherent whole.

2. Research should be conducted to measure the success or failure of arriving at the alienation effect using Stanislavski's System as outlined in this study on productions of Brecht's plays.

3. Research should be conducted to identify activities and exercises in the area of external and internal tempo rhythms consistent with the explanation given by Stanislavski.

4. Research should be done on ways in which experiments on the training of the physical apparatus -- the actor's body -- such as Grotowski's can be applied to the emotional side of the system.

5. Research on developing exercises specific to each section or tool in the system should be conducted in order to honor Stanislavski's exhortation to continue the experiment he began.

The fact that Stanislavski is a household name in the theater world works against proper use of the system bearing
his name. Students and teachers believe that they have been exposed to all of Stanislavski's system while in reality they were exposed to only a few of his ideas. Teachers of acting should realize that teaching only parts of the system is a violation of the mission of liberal arts education to teach truth. Failing to teach the entire system also harms the art of acting since the acting student is not taught how to carry out his craft. A renewed effort to teach the system in its entirety is needed to counter prevalent conceptions that Stanislavski's is a system that usually is thought to serve only realistic theater. Such an application in teaching the undergraduate can only result in better preparation of the student and in the advancement of the art of theater. Teaching the Stanislavski System does not promote any one style over another unless it is taught incorrectly. The Stanislavski System prepares the student to act in all styles of Western theater.
REFERENCES


Lachenbruch, Jerome (1923). Players as Prophets. The Nation, 7, Feb., 156.


