



Stanislavski Knowledge Organiser

CAPA212 – Modern Text

Understand how to interpret and analyse text in modern and classic dramatic writing.
Perform dialogue from modern and classic texts

Constantin Stanislavski & Naturalism

Naturalism

Theatrical movement and genre founded in 19th Century. Naturalistic theatre incorporates the concept of the 'fourth wall' – the idea that the audience is outside the action, peering in on the 'real' events taking place on stage. To maintain the illusion of reality, the actors portray their characters as authentically as possible, avoiding stylised theatrical techniques (such as addressing the audience directly). Settings, too, are true to life, often containing period details. Plays tend to concern the lives of middle or working-class characters in contemporary contexts, and often address topical social issues. Dialogue is based on conversational prose that reflects everyday life.

The System

This term refers to the methods used by Stanislavski to foster believable performances in his actors. Working with the Moscow Arts Theatre, he revolutionised acting in the 20th Century. Reacting against the stock characters and over exaggeration of Melodrama, he advocated the illusion of reality on stage.

Objective

An objective is the reason for our character's actions. What are they trying to achieve? Objectives are always transitive verbs (to confront her, to tempt him) and are not always achieved. A character's objectives are likely to be stages in the journey towards the **super-objective**.

Super Objective

Each character in the play has an overarching objective towards which all their actions are directed, usually linked to the overall outcome in the play. We use the word super-objective to characterise the essential idea, the core, which provided the impetus for the writing of the play.

Subtext

The script of a play could be called the text. The **subtext** is the actual meaning and motivation behind the lines that are spoke and the actions taken. This can be communicated to the audience through the actor's use of intonation, gesture, pauses or stillness. Stanislavski instructs the actor to create all thoughts which precede his or her cue, but not to express them all. **'Keep in mind that a person says only ten per cent of what lies in his head, ninety per cent remains unspoken'**.

Units of Action

A unit is a portion of a scene that contains one **objective** for an actor. A unit changes every time a shift occurs in a scene.

Through Line

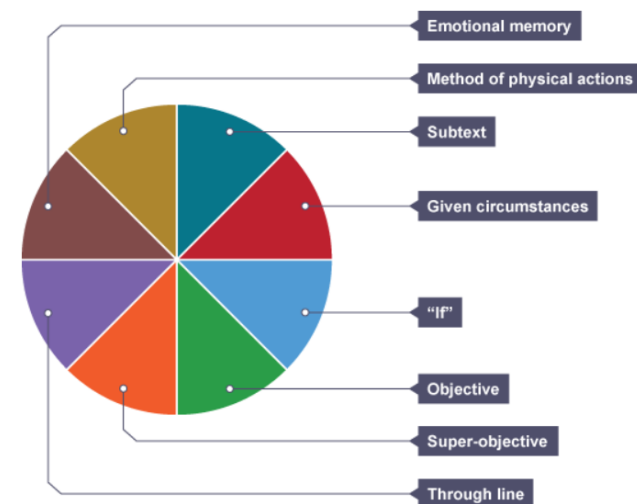
The through-line is the path and progress that takes the character from an initial position, the beginning of the play to his or her goal or super-objective. The through line includes all **units and objectives** along the way towards the climax of the play.

Given Circumstances

The actors must make an initial examination of the text to gather information about their characters' situation, relationships, history and physical characteristics. This material is used as a baseline for all further character development. In addition, the actors are encouraged to consider how the details of the production, such as sets, lighting, costumes and properties, affect the characters' psychology and actions.

If

Stanislavski said that the character should answer the question, 'What would I do if I was in this situation?' Also known as the **'magic if'**, this technique means that the actor puts themselves into the character's situation. This then stimulates the motivation to enable the actor to play the role.



Emotional Memory

Emotional memory is when the actor finds an experience where they felt a similar emotion to that demanded by the role they are playing. They then 'borrow' those feelings to bring the role to life.

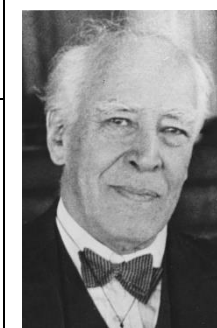
Method of Physical Actions

By remaining 'in character', even when engaging in mundane physical actions, an actor can improve the truth of a performance. During the rehearsal process, an actor should move from 'activity' – a simple piece of stage business – to finding a set of 'physical actions' which will lead to a more complex psychological portrayal of character.

"All action in theatre must have inner justification, be logical, coherent, and real."

Theatre practitioner

Someone who creates theatrical performance and/or writes theatrical ideas and teachings.



1863 – 1938

Constantin Stanislavski was a ground-breaking Russian **theatre practitioner**.

He was widely recognised as an outstanding character actor and the many productions that he directed earned him a reputation as one of the leading theatre directors of his generation.

His principal fame and influence, however, rests on his 'system' of actor training, preparation, and rehearsal technique.

Known as the Godfather of Acting, most modern actors, particularly 'method' actors, use training and methods which stem from his System.

Key Terminology

Voice	
Pitch	Speaking in a high, low or natural voice.
Pace	The speed at which someone speaks.
Pause	Where sound stops, how often and for long.
Projection	Enables audience to hear actor's voice.
Volume	How loudly or softly the words are spoken.
Articulation	Clarity of your diction and voice.
Tone	Suggests your mood and your intention.
Inflection	The rise and fall of your voice.
Accent	Particular to a country, region, local dialect.
Repetition	Repeating a sound or words for emphasis.
Emphasis	Choosing to stress particular words to convey meaning.
Physical	
Facial Expression	Using your face to show mood, emotion, feeling and responses.
Posture	Stance, way of standing and sitting.
Gesture	Movement or action of any part of the body to express idea, feeling or mood.
Mime	Demonstrating an action with an object that doesn't exist.
Proxemics	Use of space, how the characters are placed on stage. The distance or level between character shows their relationships, feelings and give clues of the situation or the people within the situation at that moment.
Gait	The way you walk.
Eye Contact	Establishing eye contact with another actor or the audience.