The Actor
What are the main challenges of the actor throughout history?
Acting

• What are the main challenges of actors throughout history?
  • To make characters believable.
  • The ability to manipulate the voice and body.
  • Combination of the inner and outer techniques.

• If the audience is to believe in the characters on stage, the performers must be convincing.
What is Acting
Two basic styles

• External
  - Imagining how a character should walk and talk.
  - Imitate those imaginations while performing the character.
  - Very technical.
  - Very physical.

• Internal
  - Don’t imitate but actually become or experience the character while on stage.
  - Psychological, the actor must understand the mind of the character.

• Both techniques are successfully utilized in today's performance.
Past to Present

• Was Greek theatre primarily external or internal.
  - The actor Ion used both internal and external methods. Not only did he imitate the character but took on the role of the character and possessed the same emotional response.
  - The actor Quintilllian imagined the death of his wife and children during the performance. This would drive him to tears in front of the audience. He also used very calculated acting techniques.

• Present theatre uses both techniques in acting
Internal Approach
Konstantin Stanislavski
(1863-1938)

- Developed the a method of acting referred to as the Stanislavski System.
- Stanislavski was a director and actor
- Founder of the Moscow Arts Theatre.
- Overview of the “Stanislavski System”
  - He wanted his students to discover the inner truths of the character they were playing. He wanted the actors to be as real as possible.
  - The actor brings their own experiences and feeling to the character. (Affective Memory)
  - Represent the character as a real and whole person by becoming them and accomplishing their goals or tasks.
  - He believed the actors should focus solely on the other actors on stage and not recognize or play to the audience in any way. (Representational)
Stanislavski System

• **Action onstage**
  • Every action the actor makes on stage is specific to the circumstances of the play.

• **Importance of specifics**
  • The actor cannot express emotions in a vague way. Every action must be specific.

• **Inner truth**
  • Discovering the subjective world of the character.

• **Given circumstances**
  • The actor must understand every situation of the character.

• **Concentration and observation**
  • The ability of an actor to be fully engaged or focused on an object, person or event while onstage.

• **Action onstage**
  • All actions on stage must have purpose. The actor must be focused on a series of physical actions that are linked together by the circumstances of the play. “What? Why? and How?”

• **Through line of a role**
  • The actor must find the superobjective of the character. What is the character’s driving force? To do this the actor must divide the play into beats. These are smaller objectives that help achieve the primary objective.
Stanislavski System

- Stanislavski brought this technique to the United States around 1924.
  - Lee Strasberg, Sanford Meisner, Stella Adler, Harold Clurman were all followers of the Method acting technique or versions of it.
  - Lee Strasberg, Harold Clurman and Cheryl Crawford started the Group Theatre in 1931 which revolutionized acting in America.
  - The Actors Studio was founded in 1947 by Cheryl Crawford, Ella Kazan, and Robert Lewis. Strasberg joined in 1951 until his death in 1982. The Actors Studio is still in existence today.
“The Method”

- Lee Strasberg emphasized the use of personal experiences to connect with the character.
- Actors have been known to stay in character when not on stage. They immerse themselves in the character.
- The actor has a strong psychological connection with the character.
- Emotional Recall
  - The ability for actors to achieve emotional truth on stage.
  - By recalling sensory impressions of a past experience, certain emotions are aroused and can be used in a current role.
The Meisner Technique

• Sanford Meisner taught a version of the Method called the Meisner Technique. Very similar to Stanislavski.

• Meisner believed that Strasberg focused too heavily on the inner truths of a character and not enough on the physical actions.

• Believed the actor should immerse themselves completely in the moment and focus on their partner.

• He taught actors to be spontaneous by understanding the given circumstances of the scene. (Conditions of the characters world)
Actors of the past and present

• Marlon Brando was one of the first Method actors trained.

Street Car Named Desire Video

• Other actors include, Alec Baldwin, Robert DeNiro, Sally Field, Gene Hackman, Dustin Hoffman, Dennis Hopper, Walter Matthau, Jack Nicholson, Al Pacino, and Gene Wilder
External Approach (Physical)
The Skill Of Virtuosity (Technical Skills)

- Although Stanislavski believed in the internal approach, many of his techniques involved the technical aspects of training.
  - Raising your voice over a specified course.
- Ability to draw in and capture your audience's attention. Training your skills as an actor.
- There are two main areas to focus on
  - “a magnificently expressive voice”
    - Articulation
    - Poetic
    - Seductive
  - “a splendidly supple body”
    - Great physicality
    - Expressive body language
    - Bold and beautiful movements
The Actor’s Instrument

• The Actors body (Physical)
  - The physiological elements
    • Vocal & Speech (Production of sound)
      - breathing
      - resonance
    • Speech (Forming of the sound)
      - articulation
      - pronunciation
    • Movement (Physical relaxation, muscle control, and movement patterns).
      - Combat, dance, and mime are essential elements in discovering how the body can move.
The Actor’s Instrument

The psychological elements

• Imagination
  - Connect with every moment unfolding
  - Reality, convincing the audience
  - Understand and relate to the relationships on stage
  - Personalize the role the actor must take on

• Discipline
  - Actors are part of a group or ensemble
  - Professionalism must be met at all times
  - Following a schedule is extremely important
The Physical Side of Performance

• Through the twentieth century, while acting teachers were focusing on the inner life of the character, another group of teachers were focusing on the physical side of performing.
  • Vsevolod Meyerhold developed a style of acting called Biomechanics.
    • Emphasized total control of the body, similar to circus performers.
  • In Asian theatre, the use of absolute control, the mastery of the body and nerves was necessary to carry out the stylized movements of a character.
    • Tadashi Suzuki developed a training technique emphasizing the connection between the feet and the ground.
A Synthesis of Both

• Today, training programs offer a combination of both acting styles.

• The actor must combine both the outer physicality and the inner emotions and feelings of the character.
The Approach
The Approach

- Analyze the script.
- Research the play
  - Style
  - Mode of performance
- Discover the characters objectives
- What are the given circumstances?
- Identify the tactics needed to achieve ones objective.
  - Ex. Romeo’s objective= win over Juliet
    - Tactic= write her love poems.
- Study the outer aspects of the character
  - How do they move.
  - What do they look like.
Magic

- The presence the actor has on stage
- To stand out and embody the character on stage.
- A presence that cannot be taught.
How Do You Become an Actor?
Becoming an Actor

• Training programs both private and at universities exist throughout the country.
  - Developing an approach to a role
    • The inner life of the character
  - Developing the physical and vocal training
    • This is the technical aspect or virtuosity
• Every training program approaches this differently. You need to find a program that suits your needs.
The Process of Being an Actor
Audition

- How the actor gets the role.
- This process requires mental and physical preparation.
- This is the time for the actor to demonstrate their ability to play the role.
- Some auditions are cold readings while others are prepared.
- Usually requires a 1-2 minute performance.
- Requires flexible staging to accommodate flexible spaces.
- The director looks for the ease the actor fits into the role and how they interact with others.
Rehearsal

• Usually requires 5-7 weeks of preparation.
• Depending on scope of the production this will vary.
• This is the period the actor has to learn the role.
• characters thoughts, goal, objectives, obstacles, fears and subtext of the play.
• Memorization is only one aspect of the job.
• Experiment with timing and delivery.
• A time for trying and learning.
• A time to be creative and spontaneous.
• A time for structure.
Performance

• The ability to be in front of a live audience.
• The first interaction with the audience can invigorate, terrorize, enhance the performance or take away from it.
• Every actor is different when faced with the first night of a performance in front of a live audience.
• The audience can change the actor and the performance.
  • Timing.
  • Subtle sounds and reactions.
• Every performance is different for the actor. Although the objectives stay the same, the take or tone of each situation can change from night to night.
Summary

- Acting is a rewarding and difficult career.
- It is an addicting passion that grabs hold of millions of people from professionals to amateurs all over the world.
- A select few are the super famous and super wealthy.
- Many want to be actors, but only a select few can call acting their profession.

Audition Video Clip  Rehearsal Video Clip