**Stanislavski’s System**

All acting school nowadays study, discuss, develop, use, modify, contradict, reject and faithfully follow Stanislavski’s system. It is now impossible to discuss about acting without somehow referring to Stanislavsky.

Stanislavsky’s system or Stanislavsky’s Method as it is called is a progression or series of techniques used to train actors to create a believable characterization for performance. From a theoretical point of view Stanislavsky’s System mainly collect and codifies the principles of human creativity necessary to an Actor. From a practical point of view the System suggest specific techniques that helps Actors to develop a state of mind and body that encourage “Experiencing” or creative state.

**Stanislavsky’s System can broadly be divided into two parts-**

1. Techniques that help to develop a proper “Sense of Self” and hence induce in the Actor a creative state of “Experiencing”
2. Methods that offer pathways into dramatic text for successful creation of a character.

Konstantin Stanislavsky was a Russian Actor, Producer, Director and Theoretician who said that- “I believe that all master of arts needs to write, to try and systematize their Art.” To do so, from the age of fourteen (14) he kept detailed note on every performance he did or saw. All these notes culminated in an autobiography **“My Life in Art”**, three acting manuals /guides **“An Actors Prepare”**, also called **“An Actors work on Himself”**, **“Building a Character”** and **“Creating a Role”.** All these translations became international bestseller that introduced Stanislavsky’s System to the English-speaking world. However, he never deemed/considered his System or his books complete. They remain dynamic, experimental exploration of the unique communicative power of theatre.

**Techniques that help to develop a proper “Sense of Self” and hence induce in the Actor a creative state of “Experiencing”**

Stanislavsky believed that “Sense of Self” provide the soil from which the role can grow. It combines two alternating, nearly simultaneous perspective for an Actor- being on stage and being within the role or character.

According to him the Actor develop a theatrical “Sense of Self” by learning to control the Skills of Concentration, Imagination and Communication. So, an Actor must always work on these three things consistently.

 **Concentration**

 Stanislavsky suggested that an Actor must have total mental and physical concentration on stage. He termed this psycho-physical state **“Public Solitude”**

Public Solitude is when the Actors turns out anything external to the world of the play. They behave in public as if in private.

Stanislavsky noticed that the visual of the auditorium and the presence of the public hamper or breaks the concentration of the Actor and restrict his freedom of mental and physical expression. So, Stanislavsky suggested that the Actors should know to restrict the sphere of his concentration within the stage and the world of the play so that he can fully give his attention to his performance and have freedom of mental and physical expression. That doesn’t mean that the Actor must altogether cease to feel the public but the public must be concerned only so far as it neither exert pressure on him nor divert him unnecessarily. He also said that this sphere of concentration must be elastic so that the Actor can expand and contract as required for his performance.

 To attain this psycho-physical concentration Stanislavsky suggested the Actors to sharpen his senses through observation and exercises. The senses are-

1. Sight- sense of viewing
2. Hearing- sense of hearing
3. Touch – sense of touch
4. Smell- sense of smell
5. Taste- sense of taste

Stanislavsky added a sixth sense that is “Emotional Memory” He advocated that actors should sharpen his Emotional Memory just as they should do with other senses through exercises.

**Imagination**

Stanislavsky believed that Actors must treat the frictional circumstance of the play as if real and visualize the details of the character’s world specifically and to do so he must have strong imaginative power. Stanislavsky argued that Actors should not speak without an image in the mind’s eye and suggested developing a filmstrip of image to accompany the performance of every role.

Stanislavsky’s **“Magic if”** is one of the most useful tools for Actors even today. This is used by Actors to open up their imaginations in order to discover new and interesting thing about the character they are playing.

Stanislavsky suggested that Actors should place himself in the frictional circumstance/situation of the character and imagine what he would do in that situation. This is called “Magic If”. Magic if describes an ability to imagine oneself in a set of frictional circumstance and its future possibilities in terms of action.

**Communication**

According to Stanislavsky there cannot be any drama without interaction or communication- it may be between two Actors on stage or with the audiences. And Communication on stage by Actors happens mainly two ways, first verbally and secondly non-verbally. Words are only one vehicle for interaction. Dialogue represent only a part of the total communicative power of the play.

He opines that Actors communicate **“Subtext”** through non-verbal means like gesture, body-language, tone of the voice, facial expression, pause etc.

“Subtext” is a term that describe anything a character thinks or feel but does not or cannot put into words.

Stanislavsky was influenced by Indian Yoga by this he believed that communication as transmitting and receiving of “Rays of energy”. He believed that our breathing puts us in touch with rays. By exhalation we send rays into the environment and by every inhalation we receive energy back into our body.

Therefore, Stanislavsky suggested Actors to recognize and manipulate the rays of energy that helps communication and also to improve the non-verbal communication by improvising situations that involve naturally silent moments.

Taken together, Stanislavsky’s books and manuscripts encode a coherent and remarkable consistent set of assumptions about Acting. All his exercises, techniques i.e. the “System” is based on these ideas.

**First Assumption**

The first holistic believe is that the mind and the body represent a psycho-physical continuum, based on a French Psychologist **Theodule Ribot.**

  Stanislavsky believed that- “In every physical action there is something psychological and in every psychological something physical” Following from this assumption Stanislavsky pointed out that-

 “Physical tension is creativities greatest enemy, not only paralyzing and distorting the beauty of the body but also interfering with the minds ability to concentrate and fantasies or imagine.” Performance demands a state of physical relaxation, in which the Actor use only the enough muscular tension to accomplish what is necessary.

**Second Assumption**

Based on Leo Tolstoy, who argued that Art communicate felt experience not knowledge, Stanislavsky believed that- “Actors must be dynamic and improvisatory during performance to deliver what exactly he feels at the moment. Stanislavsky termed such Acting as “Experiencing”.

He argued against the nineteenth century traditions, which taught actors to represent characters through carefully crafted intonation and gesture. Stanislavsky relates “Experiencing” to a state of mind that seem more similar to “Inspiration” or “Creative Mood”. He compares it to the sensation of existing fully within the immediate moment. Which is usually called moment-to-moment work of an Actor. He described this state happy but rare when the Actor seized by the role/character.

**Methods that offer pathways into dramatic text for successful creation of a character.**

Stanislavsky’s system offers pathways into the dramatic text for successful creation of a character. One begins with imagination and intellect- “Affective cogitation” and the other one relies on physicalizing - “The Method of Physical Action”

Stanislavsky said that- “The first acquaintance/contact with a role is the first stage of creative work and he compares this as first meeting of lovers, in which the author seduces the Actor. Rehearsals brings them closer resulting in their marriage. The relationship eventually leads to the birth of a new human being, the character.

**“****Affective Cogitation”**

While we start the rehearsal process of a play, we at foremost begins with all the Cast/Actors reading the script and discuss each and every elements of the play. This work relies on our intellect so Cogitation. After that each Actor work individually on the character they are going to play. They try to visualize distinct moments of the character’s life which triggers or bring emotion which is Affective. So, the process can be termed as Affective Cogitation.

**“The Method of Physical Action”**

This is a rehearsal technique that assumes emotional life may sometime be more easily aroused and fixed for performance through work on physical life of the role/character rather then through inner work. Here the Actors discovers and perform the logical sequence of physical action to carry out the inner, purposeful action of the scene.

**Stanislavsky believed that there are three basic things behind creativity-**

1. Mind (For analysis and understanding)
2. Will (For Control)
3. Feeling (Which develop a passionate relationship with the character we create)

Stanislavsky believed that if our preparatory work is right, the result will take care of themselves. He says that Actors makes a common mistake when they worry about the result, rather than the action.

People act on stage, means do actions uncover or express their inner sorrow, joy, relationship and everything about life of the human spirit/soul on stage. He believed that actions distinguish drama from all other Arts.