

Analysis of Campus Drama Performance Practical Ideas Based on Stanislavski System

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Abstract

The Stanislavski System is still the basic teaching system for most drama classes around the world today. This paper studies the actual implementation ideas of the Stanislavski System in the context of campus theatre performances. Systematically analyze the core components of the system, namely the 'Magic If', emotional memory, the mode of physical action, and communion, and apply them as practical teaching strategies for university students. Psychophysical exercises, scripted scene studies and dramatic improvisation can be used to help students learn how to express emotions and inner reasons in character portrayal sincerely, rather than just imitating externally. Research shows that campus theatre education should move away from results-oriented directing to a process-oriented acting, nurturing students' concentration, imagination and empathy. In addition, it also addresses the current criticisms of the system and proposes an all-encompassing, flexible approach that considers various students. In short, this paper will provide a complete and theoretically sound plan for educators who hope to improve the artistic quality and educational effect of university dramatic works.

Keywords

Stanislavski System; Campus Theatre; Actor Training; Method of Physical Actions; Drama Education; Emotional Memory

1. Introduction

The theatre for students at the college is to foster their sense of beauty and humanity. The quality of the collegiate drama performances is often limited by the students' lack of professional acting skills. Student actors often engage in superficial imitation, exaggerated vocalisation and disconnected physical expressions, and thus their performances lack emotional depth and psychological authenticity. Strengthen the systematic and all-round training of actors to enhance the artistic quality of school plays. Constantin Stanislavski, a Russian theatre figure, created a full-featured and widely used system for achieving genuine-feeling performances in all corners of the world with the Stanislavski System.

Stanislavski's system of acting aimed to achieve inner truth in performance by exploring the inner life of characters rather than showing them externally. It requires the actor to live truthfully in the world of fiction and integrate mind, emotion and body seamlessly. University students generally have fewer life experiences and theatre training; thus, the system can offer them a structured, step-by-step guide for creation. Break down complex human behaviour into several relatively simple psychophysical tasks, and thus make the process of acting more accessible for amateur performers at the university.

In addition, teaching acting in a university setting faces a pedagogical problem of various origins for the students who take part in the class. Conservatory students focus their entire schoolwork on performance art; campus drama club members are often engineering, business or other science and humanities students who participate in theatre outside of class. Therefore, these students rely more on intellectualisation than on embodiment. They view the script as an

academic paper and are only interested in the theme of the work; they do not feel any sense of life or emotion. This hyper-intellectual style often takes the form of 'talking heads' on stage; the words are spoken correctly, but the body is completely stiff and unexpressive, showing no emotion related to the scene. The Stanislavski System is a good way to solve this problem at the same time. By requiring that psychological intention be in line with physical behaviour, the system motivates hyper-intellectual students to stop thinking abstractly and start experiencing life fully through their bodies; thus, it can connect literary analysis with living, breathing theatrical performance.

Although it is old, the Stanislavski System is still used to some extent in modern campus theatre. University drama clubs have a short rehearsal period, various students with different backgrounds, and their main purpose is education rather than profit. Therefore, the instructor needs to condense the extensive system of Stanislavski into some simple-to-apply and highly effective exercises that can achieve real results in a semester. Connect the abstract ideas of psychology with the students' real lives.

This paper proposes some practical and feasible ideas for applying the Stanislavski System in campus drama classes. Following the above introduction, Section 2 will present the basic exercises of concentration, imagination and the 'Magic If' as the starting points for student actors. Section 3 is the method of physical action and a key component of psychophysical unity. Section 4 explores the teaching methods for integrating emotional memory, script analysis and stage communion in rehearsal. Finally, Section 5 presents the above strategies and offers a concluding evaluation of the system's long-term value for contemporary theatrical education.

2. Foundational Exercises: Concentration, Imagination, and Given Circumstances

The first stage of introducing the Stanislavski System at the university should be to reduce self-consciousness and physical tension in the students. Stanislavski thought that muscular tension is incompatible with deep emotional expression; thus, the first step in creating a work is to relax one's muscles [1]. Given that students in a university are often stressed about their studies and fear being judged by others, instructors should start the rehearsal period with some relaxation exercises for the students. Through the construction of a neutral and relaxed physical state, students can take off the artificial social masks they wear in their daily lives and prepare their bodies to receive the impulses of a dramatic character.

Relaxation has been achieved; now, we will begin the training of attention and imagination. Stanislavski's idea of the 'Circles of Attention' is a very good teaching device for student actors [2]. By having students train their attention to focus first on a small area close by (the first circle), and then gradually extend their awareness to include the whole stage and the ensemble, directors can help them avoid the common amateur mistake of 'performing for the audience'. Such focused attention helps the student stay in the present moment of the scene and develops a sense of private solitude among the crowd, which is required for genuine performance.

The connection between the student's life and the character's life is established by creating a "Magic If" and "Given Circumstances". The "Magic If" presents a simple but profound question to the student: "What would I do if I were in this specific situation?". This method serves to take the actor out of their own life and into the imaginative world of the play [8]. It does not require the student to believe that the fictional situation is real; instead, they are to behave as if it were true. Given the "Given Circumstances" in the play - that is, the environment, history and society created by the playwright - the "Magic If" can provide a safe and orderly space for college students to explore difficult psychological problems without being too emotionally exposed.

In order to create this imaginary world effectively, educators need to train students in the detailed skills of sensory observation. University students face a large number of digital and

text-based materials in their daily studies and often have to be away from their immediate surroundings for extended periods. They walk across campus looking at their phones and are not paying much attention to their surroundings. Stanislavski's system, on the other hand, requires one to be acutely, almost excessively aware of the physical world. Directors need to arrange basic sensory exercises where students spend considerable time quietly observing, and then reproduce exactly the weight of a coffee cup, the particular texture of a woolen coat, or the specific smell of damp earth. The above training is not only to warm up the body but also to lay the foundation for developing the students' aesthetic concept. When a student actor can use a hollow, light stage prop to simulate the weight and heat of a heavy, boiling cup of tea, their body language will be more convincing immediately. This sense of truth does not require the actor's intellectual analysis, and their imagination can be in line with the actual circumstances of the play.

3. Psychophysical Unity and the Method of Physical Actions

Students have grasped the imaginative foundation, and now the focus of teaching should shift to the concrete manifestation of character behaviour through the method of physical actions. In his later years, Stanislavski came to learn that having an actor be an emotion directly would be artificial. Emotions are unstable and cannot be forced by one's will. Stanislavski proposed that emotion is the result of physical action instead [3]. Psychophysics offers a more freeing mode for campus theatre. Instead of having the child "cry" or "be angry", the director tells the child to concentrate on a particular physical task, such as looking for a lost letter urgently or packing a suitcase hurriedly.

The method will be applied in the studio. The director and the student actors need to divide the scene into 'Units and Objectives' [9]. A unit is an independent area in the scene that contains a single action, and the goal is what the character urgently desires to achieve in that unit. By using active, playable verbs (e.g., 'to intimidate', 'to seduce', 'to comfort') instead of static adjectives (e.g., 'to be sad') to set goals, students are given playable actions. When a student vigorously pursues a clear physical goal in the face of obstacles in the scene, a suitable emotion will be naturally and authentically generated.

In accordance with the method of physical action, most of the campus drama programs should be improvisational rather than scripted. Improvisation enables students to discover the basic purpose and movement of a scene through their own words, and they are not forced to learn lines by heart at this stage [5]. By physically improvising the central conflict of a scene, students learn how to move and feel in the presence of others. After a stable physical score of the actions has been achieved through improvisation, the playwright's particular dialogue can be added to the action, and thus a performance can be created where the words are motivated by real physical circumstances rather than being empty rhetoric.

The first step in using the psychophysical method is to create a specific "Score of physical actions". Given the busy life of university students and the frequent changes in their schedules due to exams and classes, these actors have found it difficult to maintain the consistency of their characters over an extended period. The Score of Actions serves as a stable reference. The director and the actors have painstakingly devised all the movements in a particular scene, such as how to walk to the window, light a cigarette or close a book forcefully, and each specific motion is connected to a certain psychological purpose. This score gives the student a very organised, reproducible blueprint for the performance. When a student is feeling emotionally blocked or lacks the will to create during a performance, they do not need to force emotions artificially. Instead, they will simply carry out the pre-set scores of physical actions with all their might and concentration. Since physical actions are inherently related to the truth of a character's psychology, when performing these physical scores, one will inevitably experience

the corresponding emotions in their heart; therefore, even on days when one is in a bad mood, the performance will maintain its high quality.

This psychophysical training can also accommodate various learning styles of the university students. Recent studies on neurodiversity in actor training have indicated that the method of physical actions is especially suitable for students who have difficulty with purely intellectual or text-based learning approaches [4]. By connecting the process of acting with embodied, physical reality, educators can create an all-inclusive and accessible drama curriculum that helps more students with various needs achieve success on stage.

4. Advanced Techniques: Emotional Memory, Communion, and Spatial Dynamics

A deeper psychological foundation of character construction in the Stanislavski System requires careful handling of 'emotional memory' (or affective memory). This way, the actor will remember a personal experience from their own life that has made them feel in a particular way and bring that emotion to life on stage. Although it is very effective, campus theatre in teaching should be used cautiously. University educators need to ensure that the students use organised, manageable memories rather than fresh, traumatic ones in the drama classroom, as it is not a clinical therapy setting [7]. When used appropriately, focus solely on sensory recall (sight, sound, smell) rather than emotional dwelling, and thus help student actors form a deep, empathetic connection with characters who have lived different lives.

The end result of the Stanislavski rehearsal process is to identify the 'Super-Objective' and the 'Through-Line of Action'. The Super-Objective is the character's final, all-encompassing wish for life in the play [6]. Every individual unit's objective must logically connect to form an unbroken chain that aims to achieve this Super-Objective. For the student actors, this Through-line will help them maintain the character's consistency in the play. It is not a group of individual feelings, but rather an all-encompassing and moving story for the audience to share. In addition to the internal world of emotions, the space on stage should also be used to help the actors experience these emotions. Campus theatre spaces are notoriously irregular; some are fully equipped auditoriums, while others are converted lecture halls with poor acoustics and flat lighting. Student actors need to learn how to use any space provided for them effectively in the service of their characters. The director can have the students use the furniture and space to explore the internal conflicts in life by moving around. When a character is in a difficult situation due to talk, the actor should not only show this unease in their face but also physically move to the corner of the stage and use the set walls to show that they are psychologically confined. This sense of space will help the Stanislavski System be expressed in all parts of an actor's body, not just in their mind; it can be presented outwardly as a powerful language for the audience.

Finally, the success of any campus theatre production requires the entire group, and therefore Stanislavski's idea of 'Communion' is necessary. Communion is the continuous and changing connection of attention and response among the actors on stage. Students in a school are so focused on their own lines and actions that they do not pay attention to or respond appropriately to what their scene partners are doing. The director will show that acting is reaction. Through special group exercises, the students need to be able to receive the impulses of their partners actively and let these impulses determine their next move. The cycle of action and reaction is continuous; thus, life occurs here.

The new applications of these technologies need to be culturally and socially appropriate. Recent criticisms of traditional actor training have begun to address the need for adaptation in applying the Stanislavski System to diverse identities, including queer and marginalized students; that is, the "given circumstances" and "magic if" should not implicitly assume

normative, majority-centric norms [10]. Rather than seeing the system as inflexible dogma, campus theatre educators can view it as an all-purpose tool kit to create a space where all students feel comfortable using their own identities to express themselves in classical and modern works authentically.

5. Conclusion

The Stanislavski System can be applied systematically in the teaching of campus theatre to provide a strict and highly effective method for cultivating students' enthusiasm into disciplined, sincere artistic creation. By moving the focus of direction from the external results to the internal psychophysical processes of the actors, educators can enhance both the educational value and artistic quality of university drama productions significantly. Relaxation, the 'Magic If', the Method of Physical Actions and stage communion are all integrated to provide students with actors' tools for exploring difficult dramatic works sincerely and deeply.

In addition, the application of this system in an educational institution extends beyond the single purpose of putting on a good play. The Stanislavski System naturally fosters essential life skills that are very useful for university students. Study the text thoroughly, concentrate deeply, show genuine empathy, and be able to work well in a group. Therefore, the process of acting can be regarded as an all-encompassing inquiry into humanity that makes students explore the reasons for people's behaviour at a deeper level.

To keep up with the times, teaching of the Stanislavski System at the college level should be flexible and inclusive of all students' different backgrounds. Educators need to adapt the above historical methods by adding modern psychophysical practices and inclusive education, thus creating a safe and lively rehearsal environment. Finally, with pedagogical care and artistic integrity, the Stanislavski System will continue to serve as a foundational support for campus theatre education and enable the next generation of students to explore and express the profound truths of life through performance.

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