

Character Realization in Realistic Acting: Pathways to Characterization within the Stanislavski Tradition

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Abstract: Creating real and soft characters is an extremely difficult problem for artists of the realistic performance tradition. However, how actors actually achieve characterization has not always been given full attention in either academia or actor training. The paper studies how characterisation in the realistic acting tradition has developed. Stanislavski first established a system in his works, and many others followed with different applications, including Strasberg, Chekhov, Meisner, Adler, and Hagen. It also positions these methods in the current view of cognition, embodiment and psychophysical actor training. By studying practitioner texts and historical studies of pedagogy, as well as current theoretical research, the four main paths to realistic characterisation can be presented in this paper: imaginative inhabitation of given circumstances, development of internal and external character resources, physical and vocal embodiment and relational construction through rehearsal. Qualitative literature-based methods are employed to compare the above techniques and develop a practical framework for performers and teachers. The study believes that authentic characterization cannot be reduced to the interior world of a person; rather, a good performance is the outcome of interacting with imagination, body, voice, action, relationships, etc.

Keywords: Realistic acting; characterization; Stanislavski system; emotional memory; physical characterization; rehearsal process; performance pedagogy.

1. Introduction

What is needed to give life to an imaginary being? It may be a relatively straightforward question for most actors who have been waiting in the wings and gone on stage before their cue. More than a hundred years of Western theatre and screen performance have been influenced by the tradition of realistic acting, and many other forms of theatre have had a shorter history of focused development for characterisation. At the same time, the specific abilities actors employ to turn textual characters into individualised human beings are not well-explained in research or in training practice.

The first significant work on the history of this tradition was by Stanislavski at the Moscow Art Theatre. His idea was not the authoritarian model, but rather an expansion of all types of ways to create theatre based on precise psychology, deliberate actions and the search for humanity. Theatrical culture at that time mainly took the form of stock plays, had rigid gestures and verbose speeches. Stanislavski revised both the methods of acting and the basic ideas of true expression for life in the theatre. His ideas were later organised, debated, translated and reinterpreted, and thus it is difficult to distinguish the original system from later ones. But this desire for an accurate representation of people has been the drive behind all schools of realism.

What has not been covered by the past is the actual process of characterisation. The problem is not only how to realise a realistic performance in terms of goals and purpose, but also how to change textual characters into real people with their own lives, memories, habits, wishes and ways of living, and to occupy space in different ways. This paper examines whether we can make characters in real life, and if so, how to achieve that sense of realism.

This paper will take a few types of characterisation in realistic acting. It selects texts from teachers' practitioners, histories of education, and modern research on cognition and embodiment. The paper will introduce the method and then

lay the theoretical foundation for characterisation in the realistic tradition. Then, it will address the individualisation of the character, propose specific practical paths for achieving this goal, and study the implications of this system for actor training. As a qualitative and theoretical study, we have also put forward some future research topics that will be used to test and extend the proposed framework.

2. Methodology

It is a research on description. Based on the above literature. It is not to be taken as a standard for the way of acting in classroom experiments and performances, but rather an inquiry into the conception and application of characterisation within the tradition of realistic acting. Therefore, this research will be based on a wide-ranging review of practitioner publications, a comparative study and theoretical synthesis of historical research on acting pedagogy and recent studies on embodiment and cognition [16, 18, 20, 28].

The first sources are Stanislavski's writings on actor training, especially his thoughts about given circumstances, action, imagination, and physical embodiment [1, 2, 11, 12, 13]. These materials are read in connection with other reinterpretation of the Stanislavski legacy, such as the works of Strasberg, Chekhov, Meisner, Adler and Hagen [4-5-22-23-24-25]. The selected materials are typical examples of strategies for teaching realistic characterisation, such as psychological preparation, creative construction, physical change, relational responses and rehearsal-based discovery.

At the same time, contemporary works of literature on cognitive and psychophysical methods for acting have also been studied; these works offer new theoretical language for expressing the interaction among the body, imagination, emotion and audience perception [7, 10, 20, 21, 29, 30]. This paper believes that acting is a historical craft tradition and a way of knowing embodied in action; it will link classical practitioner literature with contemporary theoretical studies.

The three stages of the above study are as follows: First, a

number of typical contents of realism actor training have been identified: emotional memory, physical action, psychological gesture, given conditions, objective and relational reactions, etc. Second, the concepts are compared among the action theorists to find out what is the same and what is different. Third, this study places the results in the context of a four-pathway model of character realisation. This system is not for all kinds of performance works. It is restricted to realistic acting and the problem of how to make a predefined character a unique and believable person through acting.

However, there are some deficiencies in this study because it is qualitative and theoretical. There are no interviews with actors, no observation of rehearsals, and no data on audience response. Therefore, its results are interpretations rather than statistics. However, this way is also suitable for this paper because the main problems are conceptual and pedagogical: how do the different branches of the tradition of realistic acting describe the process of character construction, and how can these descriptions be organised into a more transparent working model for actors and teachers?

3. Theoretical Foundations

The intellectual ingredients of characterisation are more spread out than one would expect in realistic acting at first glance. Manuals of practice, theatre history, instructional writing, cognitive science and phenomenology have all provided support for this talk, but none of them can offer a full-process solution. Realist characters are not only a result of literary interpretation or psychological belief; they also need to be embodied through acting, movement, voice, imagination and the experience of the audience. Cross-referencing of the above materials will be performed.

In keeping with the will of the previous owner, we should first preserve the early works of Stanislavski. An actor prepares and building a character separated the inner psychological preparation from the outer physical expression, thereby influencing subsequent actor training in pedagogy [1, 2]. However, this division does not mean that this is the end of how characters are used in practice. Stanislavski's own works moved from an initial psychological focus to a later emphasis on physical activity, active analysis and discovery through rehearsal [11-13]. Benedetti's historical research indicates that it has evolved over time and, therefore, should be viewed as a living system rather than a rigid one [3, 14, 15].

Stanislavski's work was met with varying degrees of change in the United States, and at the actors studio, Strasberg developed the method, focusing on emotional memory and personal emotional experience in acting. Concentration provided strong psychological support, but at the same time it also led to self-absorption and sometimes ignored the need for good health. The method controversy shows that there is a split in realistic acting: psychological depth versus clarity of external behaviour.

Chekhov did not use this way and focused more on imagination and the body. The ideas of psychological gesture and imaginative body suggest that a character can be known through external behaviour and internal feelings [5]. Hornby has also criticised theories of acting that put too much emphasis on psychology and ignore the physical, somatic and performative aspects of characterisation [6]. Therefore, the body does not need to be considered only an expression of the character's internal state in a certain way; it can also build and convey this character to the audience.

Later studies on Stanislavski have shown that his system of acting cannot be limited to emotional memory and psychological reality. Benedetti, Carnicke and White [9, 14, 16] have proposed that the system has been understood under the influence of translation, cultural reception and educational simplification. Knebel's work on active analysis also indicates the need for physical improvisation, scenic activity and the rehearsal process in the later Stanislavski school [17]; thus, characterisation should be considered a process of research, action and embodiment.

These days, studies of acting have increasingly used findings from cognitive science and psychophysics. Blair has conducted research on the questions in acting and cognitive neuroscience to extend the field of actor training beyond mind and body separation [7]. Kemp further studies the connection among imagination, attention and somatic simulation in performance [10]. Zarrilli, Roach, McConachie and Noe have also provided some important theoretical resources for conceiving of acting as embodied practice rather than psychological representation [20, 21, 29, 30]. These ideas do not replace the skills of practitioners but rather explore the close connection among physical movement, imagination and perception in realistic characterisation.

4. Character Individualization

The character's real-world performance should also be practical. All the performances have different traits. This is a typical culture of the people, which suggests an ideal person. It is not a type but rather a person who has exhibited behaviour due to certain circumstances in their life, health and other factors. The difference between fulfilling the function of a role and living according to that character is that one has taken on dramatic acts but has not lived them.

There are real-world technical problems here. Emotional expressions and typical behaviours that are recognised can represent character types such as the jealous husband, the ambitious politician, or the heartbroken mother. In this way, it cannot be personalised. It is a specific case, not a general phenomenon; it is the jealousy of one person. Impact of one's own life history, health, defensive psychology, and circumstances under which jealousy arises. Stanislavski's idea of given circumstances addresses this problem directly: a character should always be in a particular situation and be created through life under specific circumstances [1, 12].

It is still a problem for the performers. Most general emotional expressions are relatively simple to produce. A problem of human specificity. An actor can use the general signs of expression to show hate, love or sadness. The labour of producing a particular type of someone's melancholy, how it is borne by the body, how it restricts movement, what history it has accumulated, is all different. Therefore, the demand for a 'real-seeming' novelty is now a problem of technology.

The audience is a character in the film. According to Blair, the believability of a performance is linked to the connection between an actor's imaginary involvement and real-life movement [7]. If the external symbols are not based on imagination, they may seem artificial and lack life. Audience members are more likely to find an actor's body, attention and imagination believable when all of these are combined in a particular situation. The art of 'realist' acting is about finely tuned movements and behaviour that appear to be from a living person.

5. Pathways to Realization

After all, the reason why a character is from that place is never simple. The deepest inheritance of reality is not readily available. However, after decades of skills and reflection, some technical and artistic problems have still arisen. The four paths are not different ways; rather, they are all routes of humanity to which performers gain access.

The first is the creative construction of the conditions provided above. Stanislavski's magic act requires the actor to enter the circumstances of life for the character, but not to replace one's own emotions with those of the role [1-12]. The actor is asking: what if this guy, given his background and the problems he has faced in the past, were in this situation now? In some cases, emotional memory may help this attempt but should not be the independent goal of description [4]. As one adds their own imaginative resources to the particular cosmos of their role and character, they begin to connect.

The second way is to create an integrated space for people. Chekhov's psychological gestures are typical cases that show how one's inner life is revealed through external actions [5]. A gesture, posture or movement can show what a character wants to do or be in, without words. Cognitive research has also shown recently that imagined and real movement are closely linked in bodily cognition [7, 10]. Therefore, physical exercise is not only for promoting the health of the people it is intended to assist, but also for building the emotions of those who will carry out their important work.

The third way is the physical and vocal life of the character. Posture, rhythm, breath control, weight shifting, speed, changes in voice, and tone are all used to depict the characters' lives and feelings. Hornby's criticism of psychology-centered acting theory is needed here to remind us that the body is not merely a vehicle for the expression of psychology [6]. It is one of the major places for character education. Merlin's reconstruction of Stanislavski's later ideas also shows that, according to him, physical activity is not contrary to "inner truth", but can help reveal and express it [8][18].

The fourth is context and relations. There are still others. Character refers to one's attitude and response in the presence of others, as well as changes in one's circumstances. Meisner's work on real reaction and repetition, Adler's work on imagination and given circumstances, and Hagen's work on systematic preparation all deal with the same subject but from different angles [22-25]. A character is not a private thing of the performer; rather, it is a pattern of behaviour and response that is displayed in public relations.

These four paths are combined in practice. An effective model is active analysis, and it does not divide the table's discourse from physical exploration [17]. Performers experiment with the scenario through action, then return to the text and allow interpretations to arise from these embodied experiments. And thus, characterization occurs in the tension between imagination and the body, in voice and relation, under conditions of rehearsal. A separation of the above dimensions is too rigid and thus appears artificial rather than living.

A typical case can be found in the actor's work on Nina in Anton Chekhov's *The Seagull*. If the role is only to be seen as a general picture of youthful longing or disappointment, the performance will be easily sentimental and lacking in detail. Nina, in line with the Stanislavski school, must be constructed from specific given circumstances: her life in the countryside, her aspiration for artistic life, her need for external validation,

and finally her encounter with failure and perseverance. Therefore, given the above circumstances, we can be more precise about the actor's inner emotions and express them through non-verbal means, such as body language, the pace of speech, vocal tone, and physical control. In the early parts, an actor may adopt a light pace and forward movement, with a more exposed voice; in the later scenes, a heavier body, slower reactions, and a voice with a hint of weariness can be shown, but the inner spirit should not be lost. The character is also shown relationally; that is to say, Nina's behaviour is altered by Treplev, Trigorin and Arkadina. Therefore, such a role demonstrates that realistic characterization does not stem from emotional memory alone but is formed by the interaction of imagination, bodily movement, vocal expression and altered scenic relationships.

6. Discussion

The four paths above are not intended to be a strict formula. They offer a mode of operation that continuously links the inner and outer dimensions of characters with one another. In other words, if only one of the above is applied, it may not be considered genuine acting. A performance can be emotionally moving psychologically but lack physical vitality; it may be precise in form but empty of spirit. The most typical examples of realistic characterisation do not make this division.

The performers should maintain their concentration during the performance and not be lost in the ordinary. Mental state and emotions, as well as other external expressions of people's emotions, are not unrelated but often change in different contexts. Chekhov's psychological gestures, Stanislavski's physical movements, and Kemp's embodied descriptions of acting all reach the same conclusion: convincing characterisation requires the cooperation of inner and outer work from the beginning, not just at the end [5, 10, 17].

The framework for teachers and administrators proposes that the rehearsal room should be a space for exploration rather than just reproducing pre-set answers. Although the five schools of acting training have distinct strengths, these differences are not necessarily in opposition [4-25]. Or they may be seen as different ways to solve the same basic problem: how to make a written job seem like a specific person. Therefore, the developed pedagogy should enable actors to switch among psychological, imaginative, somatic and relational modes of activity.

This is why actor training cannot be seen as a set of procedures. A language for fluid crafts is required to achieve realistic characterization, and it should be able to integrate literary analysis, rehearsal improvisation, bodily movement and audience observation. The current study of cognition and embodiment can help us understand why these strategies may be beneficial, but it should not reduce acting to a scientific procedure [7, 20, 29, 30]. The Art of Acting is still a form of interpretation and practical creation.

7. Future Research Tasks

The four pathways for real-life characterisation in this study are known, but more research will still be conducted. This paper will only present some qualitative and theoretical analysis at present, and it is unknown whether this will be achieved in real rehearsal. Case studies in the classroom or rehearsal room can be employed to see how performers use the text analysis in terms of movement and voice, and how these movements and sounds change after repeated practice.

The goal of organising the various schools of education in a more ordered way will be achieved in the future. Researchers can explore whether Stanislavski training, Strasberg's Method, Chekhov's psychophysical practice, Meisner-based repetition work and Adler's imagination-based practice yield different characterisations. Such a study may include interviews with performers, teachers and directors, rehearsal diaries and performance analysis. This will help us know whether the four paths presented in this paper are equally active in all training systems or if some pathways are more prominent in specific institutions.

Future research will also explore the reaction of the public. The performer builds a realistic character and the audience can see and judge it. Therefore, researchers will be able to study the audience's perceptions of trustworthiness, emotional truth and distinctiveness in performance. Questionnaires, focus groups and automated analysis of recorded performances can all be used. This research will help to link acting pedagogy and reception studies more closely.

Finally, there is a need for more in-depth research in cognitive science and performance pedagogy and acting studies. Recent research in embodiment, imagination and neural simulation has offered some support for understanding how physical action and imaginative engagement may contribute to characterisation. However, these theories are not directly related to some rehearsal methods. Therefore, the next work should explore how to translate cognitive and psychophysical concepts into practical actor training activities without being limited to a purely scientific system.

8. Conclusion

The language of the foundation would suggest that the demand for realistic performance in characterisation is more technical than it actually is. All of these buzzwords are about real acting, living as the character, and genuine response to the scene. They present an end state rather than an effective means, so performers need to develop imagination and integrate it with the rehearsal of the body, voice, action and relational awareness.

Based on the above analysis, we have concluded that not only is there a single psychological mechanism for this. The four paths mentioned above are not independent options but rather related components of the same process of practice: creative inhabitation of given circumstances, development of internal and external resources, physical and vocal embodiment, and relationship creation through rehearsal. Stanislavski's expanding system, later adapted as a pedagogical approach and currently being researched in cognitive science. Therefore, the problems of characterisation cannot be solved by a single approach. It is the process of creating a specific and credible human figure in a play or television program based on written roles.

The first is a relatively simple architecture that does not make life difficult for developers. It can teach actors different kinds of efforts for creating various characters. It offers teachers a system for integrating psychological, creative, physical and social education. It shows that no scholars have been engaged in empirical transdisciplinary research. Realistic characterisation is thus both an art problem and a research topic that needs to be addressed through continuous

dialogue among practice, training and theory.

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