

BEHAVIOR ON THE STAGE

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Abstract

This article discusses the fact that movement is the basis of stage art. Recommendations are given regarding stage movement. K.S. Stanislavsky's definitions of movement are cited as examples to prove the idea.

Keywords: Stage action, scene, image, "if only", character, theater, mind-will-feeling, actor, psychophysical action, physical action, abstract action, training sketch.

Introduction

The art of acting is the art of stage movement. Movement is the basis of the art of acting. Line - movement: is a psychophysical process towards achieving a goal in the struggle with given conditions.

Acting is the art of stage movement. Movement is considered the foundation of acting. Action is a psychophysical process aimed at achieving a goal through the struggle with given circumstances.

During an action, thinking, sensing, and perceiving merge with the actor's physical condition into a unified whole. Movement is directed toward a goal and represents the physical manifestation of inner thoughts and emotions. Therefore, action is the result of the actor's creative process.

K.S. Stanislavsky wrote: "On stage, one must act. Acting is based on action and activity. The very word 'drama' in ancient Greek means 'action in progress.' The Latin word *acteo* is similar in meaning to 'drama,' and its root *act* is found in our words 'active,' 'actor,' and 'act.' Thus, drama on stage is a person engaged in action before our eyes."

Stanislavsky emphasizes that one must act purposefully on stage—not merely move for the sake of movement, but perform meaningful and goal-oriented actions inspired by genuine inner feelings. One should not play emotions and images, but rather act under their influence.

According to Stanislavsky, "Every movement is a psychophysical act; it consists of both physical and mental aspects, which are closely interrelated." Physical movement should have a mental foundation, while mental impulses manifest through physical actions. For example, to comfort an offended person, one may look into their eyes, sit beside them, and listen attentively—these are physical actions guided by inner emotion.

"Within every action lies an inner action, an emotion," says Stanislavsky. Physical actions stimulate thought and enrich the actor's mental state. To activate physical movement, each emotional task must be conveyed to the actor's consciousness in the most concrete way. For

instance, it is harder to perform the task “encourage your partner” than “make your partner laugh.” The second one creates more active engagement.

Thus, stage movement should be viewed as a psychophysical act directed toward achieving a goal. The key challenge is: how to perform truthful, organic, and realistic stage actions? According to Stanislavsky, this requires introducing the “magic word” “if” into the creative process.

The word “if” serves as a bridge from reality to the world of imagination, prompting the actor to respond to hypothetical situations through actions. The actor asks: “If all of this were true, what would I do? How would I act?” This awakens the actor’s imagination, stimulating creative and purposeful action under imagined circumstances.

Everything that happens on stage must have a purpose. The actor should not sit idly just to be seen by the audience but must have a clear reason for every action. Acting requires constant activity; even stillness can be a form of inner action rather than passivity. Physical stillness often results from intense inner activity, which gives depth to the actor’s performance.

Therefore, both mental and physical actions are essential in stage art. Through them, the vitality and dynamism of theatrical art are realized. On stage, one must not act aimlessly—every movement should be justified and purposeful.

One cannot simply pretend to be jealous or sad without cause. Many beginners attempt to “show” emotions, but feelings cannot be forced. The actor must act naturally, speak and breathe freely as in real life, and perform goal-directed actions.

Human psychology operates through mind, will, and emotion. Excessive self-control inhibits creativity, and emotions cannot be preserved consciously. Only volitional actions can be retained and repeated. When an action meets resistance, the resulting success or failure naturally generates emotion. Stanislavsky discovered that volitional action is the core law of an actor’s psychology—it is the only true source of emotional stimulation.

This discovery became the foundation for arousing stage emotions. The very word “actor” means “one who acts.” Stage emotions are the product of both voluntary and involuntary creativity.

Action without objects means that the actor performs an imagined activity without actual items but makes it believable through imagination and skill. This exercise strengthens imagination, form perception, and coordination. For example: peeling a baked potato, threading a needle, or slicing a lemon—all without real objects—helps actors develop muscle memory, logical sequence, and tactile awareness.

Exercises should begin with simple everyday actions such as dusting, writing a letter, sweeping, dressing, or polishing shoes. Later, more complex exercises involving imagined objects are introduced—like kneading dough, cutting glass, or sewing a quilt.

When performing such exercises, the student must imagine every detail: the type and weight of flour, the temperature of the water, the texture of the dough, and even the size of the bowl. These imagined sensory experiences make the performance believable.

During imaginary object exercises, the actor must focus on each small element of the task. Without this awareness, the action cannot feel whole. By paying attention to minor details and maintaining logical sequence, exercises become convincing and effective. Therefore, students



should regularly practice with imaginary objects to strengthen their concentration and imagination.

Working with a visible object is easier than with an imaginary one, because the actor both sees and interacts with it. When the object is imaginary, the actor must visualize, recall, and feel its form through muscular sensation.

Sample class exercises:

1. Action without objects:

Kneading dough
Knitting a scarf
Cutting glass
Wrapping a gift
Collecting honey
Repairing a socket or shoe
Tuning a dutar (musical instrument)
Making clay
Fixing a balloon

2. Lighting a match (imaginary exercise):

First, light a real match and remember its size and weight, then perform the same with an imaginary one. Repeat 5–10 times until the action becomes logical and precise. Add circumstances:

To light a cave
To find a coin in the dark
To light a stove

3. Short sketches with imaginary objects:

Sewing a moon on a handkerchief
Washing clothes
Polishing shoes
Making a small clay vase
Shaving
Sharpening scissors

Regardless of the circumstances, the basic physical actions remain the same—the only changes are intention, goal, and emotional tone.

As Stanislavsky said:

“To create even a small truth is already an act of creativity... Whoever can perform even the smallest physical action truthfully already knows half of the System.” (Speech at the Opera and Drama Studio, November 9, 1955, Stanislavsky Archive, MXAT Museum.)



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