Theories of Acting

Introduction to Theatre 270
Theories of Acting

I. What is Acting?

II. Two Opposing Schools of Thought & Practice

A. Classical. External School
   1. Denis Diderot (1713-1784)
      2. The Paradox of the Actor (1773)

B. Internal, Psychological School
   1. Konstantin Stanislavsky (1863-1938)
Theories of Acting (Cont.)

III. Historical Debate
   A. Aaron & John Hill (early 18th Cent.)

IV. Diderot’s Response

V. The Paradox of the Actor
   A. Art is Different than Nature
   B. Actor must be Neutral Vehicle for Emotional Experience
The Paradox of the Actor (Cont.)

C. Real “Feeling” would:
   1. Exhaust the Actor
   2. Not be Reproducible from Performance to Performance

D. Feelings are Inherently Destabilizing

E. Other Artists create out of Silent Concentration

F. Intense feelings are youthful: artists are mature

G. Artificial Neo-classic Drama demands Artificial Acting
VI. Konstantin Stanislavsky (1863-1938)

A. Lifetime Work in the Theater
B. “Society of Literature and Art” (1888)
C. Moscow Art Theatre (1898)
   1. Anton Chekhov
   2. An Actor Prepares (1926), Creating A Character (1929), Building a Role (1931)
VII. The Stanislavsky Method

A. Favorable Conditions
B. Ensemble Acting
C. Study of Real Life
D. Past History of Character
E. Principle of the 4th Wall
F. Principle of Relaxation
G. Focus on Character Psychology
Stanislavsky Method (Cont.)

H. Belief
I. Sense of Truth
J. The Magic If
K. Units and Objectives
L. Superobjective
The End

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