

# Stanislavski – Introduction to The System Using Physical Actions – Lesson 1

Name: Kathleen Buttolph

Grade/Level: High School to College (adapted)

Date: September 2, 2022

Curriculum Standards – Virginia	Big Idea/Focus Question/Goal	Rationale/ Theoretical Practice
<b>Theatre Arts III: Intermediate Acting &amp; Playwriting</b> <b>Theatre Arts IV: Advanced Acting &amp; Directing (22-24)</b>		
<b>Technique and Application</b> TIII.12 The student will integrate acting skills and techniques involving voice and movement. a) Initiate artistic choices to enhance performance, characterizations, dialogue, and action.  TIII.13 The student will demonstrate techniques for actor preparation b) Identify and apply acting techniques and methods for the portrayal of a character.  TIV.12 The student will refine acting skills involving voice and movement to depict multidimensional characters b) Apply movement skills in characterization—posture, gait, gesture, leading center, balance, poise, timing, and facial expression.	Search for “unique physical action which is connected to the emotion you want to stir.” (p. 22)  “The body must speak in silences.” (Moore p. 23)  Acting is action. We must understand our bodies actions whether in stillness or motion, when on stage we are in a constant state of action.	Every day we communicate - more non verbally than verbally. Think about it. We watch each other. We interact through actions only. Film and media use more non verbal script than verbal. We are sold things through body language – by someone acting out what a pill or food does to us or for us. We tell our friends, family members, and the world around us through our facial expressions, body language and gestures. In theatre, it is important for our audience to understand us. We are required to be believable, genuine, truthful. It is our duty to our audience. Stanislavski’s System and his study of Physical Actions supports our full of action acting journey.
<b>Lesson Objective(s)</b>		
The students will <i>perform</i> exercises to help free their mind without inhibitions - spontaneity. Students will respond to a given task using their imagination. Students will <i>dramatize</i> a pantomime creating a beginning, body and conclusion to a pantomimed. Students will discuss and critique class work.		
<b>Vocabulary/ Academic Language</b>		
<b>Vocabulary:</b> The Method of Physical Actions, Non-Verbal Communication, Body Language, Gesture, Facial Expression, Specificity, Believability, Observation		
<b>Academic Language:</b> Communication is not always verbal. We use our bodies to communicate and express feeling. In order to make our actions believable, we must be very specific in the action we choose. “Justify everything you do.” (Moore, p. 23)		
<b>Assessment/Evaluation</b>		
<b>Formative:</b> The students will show understanding by providing feedback and acting out scenarios. The teacher will monitor by moving between groups, asking questions, ensuring understanding. Feedback will promote student learning by being implemented into scenes.		

**Summative:** Students will perform their scenes for class. Students will explain and justify their actions.

## Instruction

### Set/Motivator:

- *Engage Students* - In theatre, we communicate with our body, our every move, every gesture.
- *Relate to Previous learning* - We've been talking about character development...
- *Relate to Real Life* - Think about ways that you speak using your body and not your words. A flash of a look to a family member or friend that says "come here" or "do not say another word" or "that was so sweet." Or perhaps when leaving a room or space – leaving class, escaping danger, exiting the grocery store. Actions are intentional movements, sensitive to the space we are in and specific to our circumstance (given circumstance will be discussed later).
- *Re-state Objectives* - Today we are going to have to let go of our inhibitions! We're going to be active. We're going to participate with our entire body.
- Today we are going to observe each other, work on intentional physical action, listen to our body, while learning to act on our intuition and create an experience based on spontaneity, incorporating specificity.

### Instructional Procedures/Learning Tasks (check for understanding following each task):

- Form a circle and "check-in". Students will use their body language to express how they are feeling in that moment. The group repeats the physical action, which accepts the feeling (and also action) as a group. For instance, if I express through a gesture that I am tired, the class will accept my gesture/action by presenting the exact same action back to me. (no words in this exercise)
- Students will lightening round, mimicking their neighbor's movement in a domino effect until the action gets back to its starting place. Going clockwise, the next person makes up a new movement... A sound effect can be added if needed.
- Actions (walking or stillness). The teacher will call out a certain emotions. The students will physicalize the word in their own unique way. Ensure truth, intentin should always be genuine. The students can walk around the space using the driving word or phrase. If support is needed provide examples (some may be stereotypes) to physicalize person/animal/emotion (proud turtle, frightened sheep or child, brave soldier, etc.)
- Mirror Game – using the partner you end with, find an open space on the stage. You are going to silently mirror your partner – standing about a 2 feet apart, we should not be able to tell who is leading and following. Work on focusing and listening with your whole body. Move with intention. Move because you want to move a certain way and you want to follow your partner and they want to follow you.
- Class Mime –Find an open space on the stage. As the teacher calls out a task, use your space for physical actions. Try not to look at anyone around you. Only focus on what you are doing - driving a car, choosing a library book, opening a coke bottle, brushing your teeth, wash hair, wash car, build a camp fire, make a sandwich, writing a letter and putting it in the mail. Ask the class to name some silent activities. Use examples from Stanislavski's

System “Sit, Stand, Walk, Justify everything you do...sit at a window, sit in order to rest.” (Moore, p. 23)

- Group mime – Divide the class into groups of 5. Assign a group mime to each group – cleaning house, working in an office, photo shoot for top magazine, activities at a park scene. The scene should have a beginning, middle, and end. Each student needs to write out their scene, but more importantly, write out their character’s physical actions. Concentrate only on the actions, the rest will come naturally. Raise the stakes – cleaning a house infested with roaches; working in an office when an irate customer enters, etc.

*Questions and/or activities for higher order thinking (same as first day):*

- How do these exercises help us when we are acting on stage? Tell me what you noticed about your own personal focus. Were you sensitive to the space around you?
- How do use specific actions to support us in every day life? Does being intentional matter? How might these intentionals change the way those around (our audience, our friends and family) perceive us. “Purposefulness connects the simplest (physical) action with the most complex (psychological) action.” (Moore, p. 23)

*Closure:*

- *What did we learn?* Discussion about Stanislavski’s Method of Physical Actions.
- *Demonstration (Do something)* Students will demonstrate understanding of Physical Actions with group performance. Instrumental music can be added.
- *Tomorrow we will...* introduce the “*Magic If*” and *given circumstances*.

*Material/Resources:* Paper and pencil, open stage or gym type floor space, Bluetooth speaker to play instrumental unfamiliar music from iPhone or similar device.

*Teacher instructional material/book(s):* *The Stanislavski System; The Professional Training of an Actor* by Sonia Moore

*Adaptations to Meet Individual Needs:* Instructions will be written on note cards. Students with a disability will have been introduced to the activity the day/week before the lesson is given. The teacher will also have pictures of people expressing a variety of emotions with physical gesture for support in performing tasks.

*Management/Safety Issues:* Stage Safety. Review rules of the theatre and performance safety.

# Meisner - Acting is Doing

## Specificity and Purpose No Matter the Words Used – Lesson 2

Name: Kathleen Buttolph

Grade/Level: High School to College (adapted)

Date: September 14, 2022

Curriculum Standards – Virginia Theatre Arts III: Intermediate Acting & Playwriting Theatre Arts IV: Advanced Acting & Directing (22-24)	Big Idea/Focus Question/Goal	Rationale/ Theoretical Practice
<p>Technique and Application</p> <p>TIII.12 The student will integrate acting skills and techniques involving voice and movement. a) Initiate artistic choices to enhance performance, characterizations, dialogue, and action.</p> <p>TIII.13 The student will demonstrate techniques for actor preparation. b) Identify and apply acting techniques and methods for the portrayal of a character.</p> <p>TIII.14 The student will apply skills and concepts for theatre performance. a) Incorporate constructive criticism and self-assessment to refine individual and ensemble performances.</p> <p>TIV.12 The student will refine acting skills involving voice and movement to depict multidimensional characters. a) Demonstrate vocal performance skills—breath control, articulation, projection, volume, pitch, tone, vocal placement, rhythm, and dialect</p> <p>TIV.13 The student will refine personal acting technique. c) Apply creative choices to communicate artistic intent</p> <p>College level SOLs/Course Objectives and Outcomes Lee Crouse Syllabus A knowledge of multiple acting &amp; directing techniques.</p>	<p>“In every moment on stage, you must be really doing something specific.” (p. 49, Silverberg)</p> <p>“There is never nothing, there is always something.”</p> <p>“Take what you get and work off it.” (p. 32, Silverberg)</p> <p>“In every moment on stage you must be trying to accomplish something specific and meaningful to you.” (p. 215, Meisner/Silverberg)</p>	<p>This lesson plan should seem like it is going back to first footsteps, back to the basics. Theatre and acting are always about revisiting foundations, our baby steps. Taking the familiar and putting it in unfamiliar contexts asks our brain to do something fun, challenging, and NEW! Every performance night should be new. Every rehearsal, perfected tech, practiced speech, should actively engage a constant drive for new purpose.</p>
<b>Lesson Objective(s)</b>		
The students will <i>practice</i> speaking with purpose using simple nursery rhyme and verse (building to a play’s dialogue). Through the given exercises, students will understand that the words they use or the words they are given are routed in purpose. And in the act of saying these words, their actions and words are trying to accomplish something. You must have a reason to speak the words.		
<b>Vocabulary/ Academic Language</b>		
Vocabulary: Emphasis/Inflection, Acting is Doing, Justify, Specificity		
Academic Language: ...”define the circumstances for each character so that everything that		
happens is purposeful.” (Silverberg, p. 218)		
<b>Assessment/Evaluation</b>		
<p><i>Formative:</i> The students will show understanding by providing feedback throughout and performing the exercises. The teacher will coach the group, asking questions, ensuring understanding. Feedback will be implemented into rhyme/verse exchanges.</p> <p><i>Summative:</i> Students will perform their nursery rhyme scenes for the class. The audience of student viewers will give feedback by explaining how they witnessed the group give purpose to the language given.</p>		

## Instruction

### Set/Motivator:

- *Engage Students* - In theatre, we use words to communicate messages, but if we do not understand the meaning or message we are trying to convey, do the words really matter? “The words you speak on stage must have a purpose.”
- *Relate to Previous learning* - We’ve been talking about character delivery and voice and diction, now let’s approach purpose...
- *Relate to Real Life* – We use our voice every day to convey messages. Our tone and inflection help us to emphasize meaning. For instance, when you are speaking to your dog, you might say “what you are doing?” This simple phrase can be spoken in a mountain of ways and have a mountain of purposes. The speaker might be scolding the dog. The speaker might be witnessing the dog wagging their tail and being cute. Or the speaker might have just come home from work and the dog is being simply greeted. This same phrase can have a variety of purposes.
- *Re-state Objectives* - Today we are going to speak with purpose, have a goal and accomplish something with our stage partner.

### Instructional Procedures/Learning Tasks:

- Let’s warm up! Form a circle and “check-in”. Students will use their body and voice to express how they are feeling in this exact moment. Say your name only, expressing your mood or feeling in this moment. For instance (guided practice), if I am tired, I might express “Kathleen” lazily or barely speaking. The group repeats the physical AND verbal action presented to the best of their ability. This warm-up accepts the feeling of this member of the group. Again, when I say “Kathleen” in a tired way, by repeating exactly the class recognizes where I am in this very moment. Kathleen is tired. I am tired.
- Warm-up with practicing some familiar nursery rhymes. The teacher will speak, and the students will repeat. (Jack and Jill, Hickory Dickory, Mary had a Little Lamb, etc.) Then students and teacher will stand in a circle. Every person will say one word of the rhyme traveling around the circle until the rhyme is complete.
- Now, let’s make sure we have these rhymes and verse memorized. We are going to first practice saying the words without meaning. “Do not lock yourself into a particular way of saying the words.” (p. 209, Silverberg) The instructor (I) will hand a safe light weight ball to someone in the group. That receiver will say the first line, then toss gently to another person who will say the next line and so on until the rhyme/verse is complete. Let’s try it. Again, you must say the words without meaning. Guided practice: I throw the ball saying “Hickory”, I throw to Matthew, he says “Dickery”, Matthew throws to Olivia she says “Dock”
- While we are here, let’s try some lines from our play *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*. You will need to focus and remember the person that speaks before and after you. Watch the person and the ball. Again, no emphasis or meaning, just say the lines/the words without meaning. I’ll stay on book, but each time there is a pause in the line or incorrect line, we’ll need to restart.
- “Every ounce of your behavior must spring from something specific you are trying to achieve.” (p. 215) Divide students into groups of 3-4. Using our verse/rhymes, each group will create a story line that has absolutely nothing to do with the characters or words or verse used. So, students will use the verse or words only with a brand-new cast of characters and unheard-of storyline. Now, “absolutely nothing” does not mean no meaning to the words, just not the meaning you originally understood. (Guided practice: I will use Silverberg’s example here of Mary Had a Little Lamb, p. 216-218). Every word has a purpose. Every word is specific and trying to achieve. Every word is DOING something. (Part 4/Chapter 1: Nursery Rhyme, p. 215-226)

*Questions and/or activities for higher order thinking (same as first day):*

- How do these exercises support our vocal and physical delivery onstage? Tell me what you noticed about your tactics in how you put purpose into your words? What did you do in order to reach your goal, your accomplishment?
- How do we use specificity in words and actions in everyday life? Same as our physical exercises with Stanislavski, does being intentional/purposeful matter? How does purposeful delivery change the way something is received? “Purposefulness connects the simplest (physical) action with the most complex (psychological) action.” (Moore, p. 23) In these exercises, the same is witnessed in our scenic dialog or everyday words and communication.

*Closure:*

- *What did we learn?* Discussion about Meisner’s approach using Rhyme/Verses.
- *Demonstration (Do something)* Students will perform their words/verse for the class. The class will give feedback about purpose, accomplishment, and specificity.
- *Tomorrow we will...* take our lines in Midsummer and ensure they have purpose and are trying to accomplish something.

*Material/Resources:* Paper and pencil

*Adaptations to Meet Individual Needs:* Instructions will be written on note cards. Chairs can be available for sitting during a circle exercise. If throwing the ball won’t work, we can sit and roll the ball. Students with a disability will have been introduced to the activity the day/week before the lesson is given. The teacher can have the nursery rhymes already printed on cards or in large print on copy paper.

*Management/Safety Issues:* Stage Safety. Review rules of the theatre and performance safety. Including safe stage practices and awareness when throwing a ball at another.

**Works Cited:**

Moore, Sonia. *Stanislavski System*. Penguin Books, 1984.

Silverberg, Larry. *Meisner Complete*. A Smith and Kraus Book, 2019.

# Chekhov – Atmosphere and Observation

## “Peer into all the details of the scene.” (p. 56) – Lesson 3

Name: Kathleen Buttolph

Grade/Level: High School to College (adapted)

Date: September 30, 2022

Curriculum Standards – Virginia Theatre Arts III: Intermediate Acting & Playwriting Theatre Arts IV: Advanced Acting & Directing (22-24)	Big Idea/Focus Question/Goal	Rationale/Theoretical Practice
<p>Technique and Application</p> <p>TIII.12 The student will integrate acting skills and techniques involving voice and movement. a) Initiate artistic choices to enhance performance, characterizations, dialogue, and action. b) Create and sustain multidimensional characters.</p> <p>TIII.13 The student will demonstrate techniques for actor preparation. b) Identify and apply acting techniques and methods for the portrayal of a character.</p> <p>TIII.14 The student will apply skills and concepts for theatre performance. a) Incorporate constructive criticism and self-assessment to refine individual and ensemble performances.</p> <p>TIV.12 The student will refine acting skills involving voice and movement to depict multidimensional characters. b) Apply movement skills in characterization—posture, gait, gesture, leading center, balance, poise, timing, and facial expression.</p> <p>TIV.13 The student will refine personal acting technique. c) Apply creative choices to communicate artistic intent</p> <p>College level SOLs/Course Objectives and Outcomes Lee Crouse Syllabus A knowledge of multiple acting &amp; directing techniques.</p>	<p>“Observe atmospheres in life.” (p. 62)</p> <p>“...create around you a certain atmosphere and, having lived in it for a while, try to imagine circumstances which would harmonize with it.” (p. 58)</p> <p>“The atmosphere inspires the actor.” It is “the soul of the performance.” (p. 62)</p> <p>What does your everyday consciousness do during those inspired moments? (p. 97)</p>	<p>Chekhov asks us to continuously engage our center through molding, floating, flying and radiating. These practices, to Chekhov, are the heart, the core of the actor becoming the artist and not just <u>“the photographer”</u> of life (“a look at you is nothing” M. Streep.) Chekhov asks us to “penetrate the psychology” in everything we do as actors in order to “reveal” to our audiences. (p.5) He confronts the actor’s “body’s resistance” on the search/our search for physical and psychological harmony. The activities and exercises here, I feel, are an introduction to and support of Chekhov’s practices.</p>
<b>Lesson Objective(s)</b>		
Students will <i>observe</i> the life and atmosphere that surrounds them. Students will <i>implement</i> Chekhov techniques of body and psychology. Students will <i>practice</i> finding the strength of their center, respecting movements and exploring atmosphere by “enveloping people and events.” (p. 55)		
<b>Vocabulary/ Academic Language</b>		
<p><b>Vocabulary:</b> Observation, Atmosphere, Psychological and Physical Harmony</p> <p><b>Academic Language:</b> “the actor, who must consider his body as an instrument for expressing creative ideas on the stage, must strive for the attainment of complete harmony between the two, body and psychology” (p. 1)</p>		
<b>Assessment/Evaluation</b>		
<p><b>Formative:</b> Students will show understanding by sharing their experience with a partner, submitting their written work and performing for the class. The teacher will mentor and coach the student by asking questions about the atmosphere being presented, ensuring the student feels they are truthfully telling the story and sharing exactly as rehearsed/hoped. Feedback from peers will be expected and encouraged as well.</p> <p><b>Summative:</b> Students will perform their observation work for their partners and for the class. Student viewers will give feedback by explaining how they experienced psychological and bodily harmony was revealed through the work.</p>		

## Instruction

### Set/Motivator:

- *Engage Students – [Don't Miss the Obvious](#)*. Watch this video. There's a lot going on in our world. When we are asked to make a single observation, we might lose sight of all that's going on surrounding a person's experience, a group activity, or just the entire picture of a powerful moment. In theatre, one of our most powerful tools is people watching. For every individual we observe or encounter, there's a lot going on. We should never assume different. Let us try to "penetrate the psychology [and atmosphere] of persons around you toward whom you feel unsympathetic." (p. 5) Meaning, let's take some time to observe wonderful, strange, everyday humanity.
- *Relate to Previous learning* - We've been talking about purposefulness in our actions and voice, now let's examine the actions, voice and purposefulness of complete strangers, our big world.
- *Relate to Real Life* – Whether out and about or sitting at home watching a screen, we witness the actions of complete strangers daily. From the very beginning of our life, as a baby, then a toddler, we mimic to learn. We observe. We act!
- *Re-state Objectives* - Today we are going to begin to examine atmosphere, physical and psychological harmony by observing the everyday works, actions, and simplicities of others.

### Instructional Procedures/Learning Tasks:

- Let's warm up! Chekhov encourages us to Mold, Float, Fly, Radiate! Using my hands, I am going to create something. Only I know exactly what I am doing at this moment, but I am going to put all of my energy into this action. Find a space in the room and think of an object or idea that you can mold with your hands. Concentrate and center all of your energy into this activity. Good.
- Let's do the same with Float and Fly. Let's float as if we are walking on water across the space and fly as if we are soaring. We will do this one at a time. Put all your energy and focus into your actions. As Chekhov suggests, make broad, wide, simple and free movements!
- Radiate! Let's move our bodies to the ground today as we find our center, "a center from which flows the actual impulses for all your movements." (p. 7) Everyone find a space on the floor and sit comfortably. From this position, I want you to make the smallest shape you can and then from this position, I want you to make the biggest shape you can. I'll demonstrate first. Now let's try it lying on the floor and staying on the floor. The opposite this time, make the biggest shape you can and now the smallest shape. We are going to slowly get higher changing our plane/our level. Going from biggest to smallest shape. Again, make broad, wide, simple and free movements! [Creating an Ensemble](#) (minute 4:45)
- We should now feel very open to enveloping the world around us. Let's practice these warm-ups each day as we move through our observation work this week.
- Your task this week is to observe an experience of a stranger. "Begin with observations of all kinds of beauty in human beings...however obscure and insignificant the beautiful features in them may be." Observe their "everyday movements and simple business." (Exercise 8, p. 16-17) Try not to miss a thing/beat.
- Practice these movements on your own. Journal about them. Describe why the person was doing what they were doing. Did they have a task that was important at hand or were they simply enjoying a coffee and good book. This observation does not have to be a big dramatic moment for the person. Focus on simple business and atmosphere.

- When you return home, go through the gestures you observed and journaled about through repetition. Repeat the gestures/movements until you feel they have truly become your own. “Concentrate on these recollections, trying not to break the flow of your concentration...Realize that each image has its own independent life. Don’t interfere with this life but, **follow it...**” (p. 29)
- On returning to class, work with a partner to share what you observed. First show your partner your repetition work, then share your written reflections.
- Once all have shared, each student will share their observation work with the group/class.

*Questions and/or activities for higher order thinking (same as first day):*

- How does the way we observe the world around us impact our actions on stage? Why is it important for us to explore all the minute details of our atmosphere, the atmosphere of others and the atmosphere of our characters? Tell me what you noticed about the exercise as you explored each step, from observation to writing to repeating movements and rehearsing to performance.
- Chekhov discusses learning “to collaborate with your creative image.” (p. 30) What does this mean for us today/this week?

*Closure:*

- *What did we learn?* Discussion about Chekhov’s approach using the observation exercise.
- *Demonstration (Do something)* Students will perform their observation work for the class. The class will give feedback about how the student created the atmosphere and the world of that which she observed. We will “peer into all the details of the scene and see how the atmosphere stamps its impression upon everything and everyone...” (p.56)
- *Tomorrow we will...* journal about the words to add to our observations and then implement language/words into our observation work. “Now speak a few words...” (p. 57)

*Material/Resources:* Paper and pencil, access to the internet and a screen for videos.

*Adaptations to Meet Individual Needs:* Video observations can be made if a student is not able to access physically leaving their home for observations. Chairs can be available for sitting during exercises. Observation cards can be made that connect to psychological and body harmony so that a student can express the emotions and gestures they are witnessing.

*Management/Safety Issues:* Stage Safety. Review rules of the theatre and performance safety. Including safe stage practices and awareness.

Works Cited:

Chekhov, Michael. *To the Actor: On the Technique of Acting*. Martino Publishing, 2014.