

<b>Theatre Practitioner</b>	Someone who creates theatrical performance and/or writes theatrical ideas and teachings.
<b>Konstantin Stanislavski</b>	Russian
<b>Born</b>	1863
<b>Died</b>	1939

He formed the **Moscow Art Theatre** and is most commonly known for his 'system'.

The 'System' was Stanislavski's acting method, born out of a quest for realism in acting. A set of rules and exercises created a foundation for actors to work from.

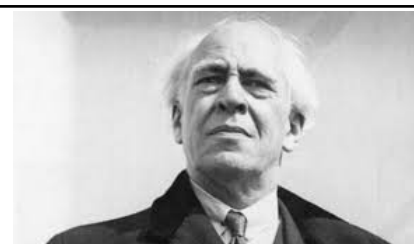
The principle objective of his system was to aid the actor in creating an illusion of actuality on stage and in convincing the audience that he (the actor) was portraying a real person, convincing his audience that his feelings and thoughts were exactly those of the character he embodied.

He taught that an actor must prepare his role in great detail, with a large amount of attention to the psychology, the motivation and the lifestyle of the character. It is important to be clear, Stanislavski does not teach you how to act, he teaches you how to work with yourself, how to organise your own creativeness and use your inner body to create the external show, it gives him a purpose.

The preparatory work on a role can be divided into three areas. Textual analysis, establishing life (internal) and transferring it to physical form (external).



## Elements of the System



**Given circumstances** - The given circumstances are the information about the character that you start off with and the play as a whole. How old is the character? What's their situation in the play and in relation to the other characters? Are there any notes provided about the play and its characters? Such notes and stage directions may not tell you everything you need to build a character but they are the starting point from which you'll work to examine the other questions.

**Emotional memory** - Emotional memory is when the actor finds a real past experience where they felt a similar emotion to that demanded by the role they are playing. They then 'borrow' those feelings to bring the role to life.

**Method of physical actions** - Imagine a simple activity like cleaning your teeth and then imagine a husband cleaning his teeth whilst deliberating on how to tell his wife about his mistress. This is a simple illustration of how a physical action can release the necessary emotions.

**Subtext** - The script of a play could be called the text. The subtext is the actual meaning and motivation behind the lines that are spoken and the actions taken. For example, the heroine might say to the hero, "I love you" and we might assume that it is the happy ending fairy tale moment. But the delivery would be very different if she was worried that he was about to walk out on her.

**If** - Stanislavski said that the character should answer the question, 'What would I do **if** I was in this situation?' Also known as the '**magic if**', this technique means that the actor puts themselves into the character's situation. This then stimulates the motivation to enable the actor to play the role.

**Objective & Super-objective** - An **objective** is the reason for our actions. What are we trying to achieve? Life, people and circumstances constantly put up barriers in our way. Each of these barriers presents us with the objective of getting through them. You shouldn't try to express the meaning of your objective in terms of a noun, always use a verb, eg 'I wish to...'  
The **super-objective** is an over-reaching objective, probably linked to the overall outcome in the play. We use the word super-objective to characterise the essential idea, the core, which provided the impetus for the writing of the play. A character's objectives are likely to be stages in the journey towards the super-objective. If that journey is perceived as a clear path to the super objective, then you have your through line.

**Circles of attention** - Stanislavski believed that an actor needed a sense of isolation in order to produce a characterisation and avoid unnecessary tension. They needed to concentrate on themselves. This is the first circle of attention. Stanislavski referred to it as Solitude in Public. Beyond this, the actor might, in the 'second circle', be aware of the character he is addressing and in the 'third circle', the rest of the production. There's no direct awareness of the audience in this. These circles of attention are achieved through focus and concentration.

**Tempo and rhythm** - Stanislavski felt that an inner and an outer tempo and rhythm were vital if you were to enact movements truthfully and link them to the expression of emotions and feelings. He linked tempo to the speed of an action or feeling and the rhythm to the intensity or depth of the experience.